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July/August 1984

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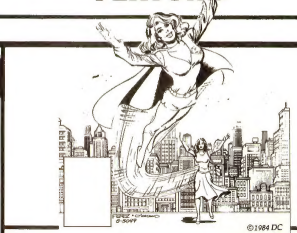

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Julius Schwartz
February 21st, 1984 marked Julius Schwartz fortieth anniversary in the comics publishing field. Schwartz was active during the Golden Age of Comics and is responsible in large part for the Silver Age of Comics. He has edited The Flash, Superman, Batman and Supergirl. He developed the Green Lantern/Green Arrow team-up that achieved much popularity. Schwartz reminisces with John Peel about the early days of comics, how he got started and how he edits today.

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EDITORIAL

By Hal Schuster

WARDROBE...WARDROBE...GIVE ME WARDROBE

A big change has happened in one of the comic books lately. It is a book that has recently undergone a major sales surge and everyone is writing about it. But for all of the wrong reasons!

As happens so often in popular entertainment everyone has spotted the obvious fact that Spider-Man has changed his costume and intelligently credit that with being the boost. And they're wrong. If that were the only change it would promote sales exactly once, and for only one issue of one of the three titles. Then everyone who wanted to would have had a chance to see the new costume in action and that would have been enough. Their curiousity satiated they would quickly stop buying the title again. Well, the change in costume did play a role but not the one everyone credits it with.

The real change? The entire direction and writing style of the book. The three new material Spider-Man books are being even more closely coordinated and every one of them has a new writer. Tom DeFalco has taken the helm of *Amazing Spider-Man* while Al Milgrom has picked up the writing chores to accompany his artwork on *Spectacular Spider-Man* and shortly Louise Jones Simonson, hot off of editing *Star Wars*, The X-Men and other Marvel hits, will be doing the honors for *Marvel Team-Up*. The changes have come fast and furious. They are numerous small shifts that combined have added up to a major redirection although individually they really weren't that noticable.

First there is the new costume with its strange and unknown powers which gives Peter Parker the chance to explore his limits and capabilities, something he hasn't done since his earliest days. For far too long both the superhero and the reader knew exactly what he could do and could predict his moves before he even made them. That has now changed in a big way.

Then his job. In the beginning Peter Parker was a high school kid who tried his hand at all sorts of odd things to try to earn some money. Of late he has simultaneously been both a successful teaching assistant and a very prominent photojournalist. His boss, Jonah Jameson, may have been very negative on Spider-Man but he was just as aware of the ability and value of his young employee. It was really hard to feel sorry for Peter on this point. His new superior, Joe Robertson, is far less satisfied with his performance and once again his job seems on the rocks. To the point where he has given up teaching and his own pursuit of a degree, an action which has even more serious implications.

As soon as he quit college his Aunt became furious with him. Too Furious for words at first as she refused to even accept his phone calls. In an effort to play peacemaker her new husband set up a meeting between May and Peter so that they could try to work things out. But here is where the old legend of Spider-Man, the early days under Lee and Ditko, most came back to haunt our hapless hero. Just as he was to head off to a meeting with his Aunt, a supervillain had to be confronted and dealt with. As a result of the battle he missed the meeting and now May is quite convinced he cares not a whit for her feelings. In a couple of issues Mary Jane is set to make an appearance that is to change Peter's life still more.

The changes follow an obvious pattern: first disrupt his certainty with his own capabilities and limits, then shake up his career position in a big way and finally set him up for an emotional fall from the ones he cares for most. In other words set the scene for his return to the halycon days when he was an interesting character and his book sold well. And the writers are doing it in style while the artists are doing their collective best to look just like the old Ditko days.

And the book is selling once again. Just as the return to basics gave a boost to Byrne's Fantastic Four and Simonson's Thor, so has the plan worked for Marvel's weakening flagship hero. Whether it will be possible to continue the coordination between the various creators on the various books remains to be seen but initial results are fine.

And here is where the costume

comes in.

While it isn't enough to capture a reader on a regular basis it is worth a look. Virtually every comic book reader will want to see this big a change in a long-standing superhero, at least once. The real trick when you totally change the direction of a book is to get people to notice that you have altered things in ways that matter. If someone has begun the habit of skipping a title having been burned by buying it in the past, the usual hype job just isn't enough. You have to try something that will really grab their attention. That is why Frank Miller's revolution on Daredevil wasn't so much a revolution but a slow process and why the new X-Men series came off to such a slow start before the boom. Both the FF and Thor had the advantage of gaining an artist/writer that got attention on their own. But Spider-Man needed a PR gimmick. And that was the real reason for the change in costume.

I started out being real upset when I first saw the sketches for the new apparel for the webspinner and felt that the artists had simply grown tired of drawing all of the webs. I still believe that to be the case but I'm willing to forgive it in exchange for the new and exciting books that we have gained.

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FEATURE NEWS

NEWS AND ANALYSIS
IS THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY GOING SENILE?

By Hal Schuster

At first the question seems quite odd. After all, isn't the direct market for comic books brand new? Don't we have a whole new system of wholesalers distributing spanking new products from recently minted publishing firms? Then why the statement that the field is already exhibiting some of the signs of advanced senility.

Well there is a basis for the suggestion. And to put the point across I am afraid that a small lesson in history will be needed. Through the 1960s there were loads of comic book companies, large and small, putting out tons of books and selling them in numbers that are just dreams today. But by the end of the decade the handwriting was on the wall. Sales were plummeting and the market for the product was rapidly disappearing as more and more of the prime outlets literally threw the books out. Simultaneously the country saw the birth of comic book fandom, or at least comic book superhero fandom which has since been quite confused with the former. The companies saw their chance. As they were approached by a few enterprising distributors (in face one on the East Coast, one on the West Coast and one in the MidWest) they felt that they could completely enchant this group of consumers and reach them in whole new ways. And thus was born the new system of distribution.

A few very large comic book distributors would sell to whatever shops were wise enough to specialize in comic books and make the wares available to comic book fans. Marvel and DC almost exclusively captured this market at that time, since their product was largely superheroes, while other companies, which were more active in other comic book types, were pushed out. Within a few years that system of marketing changed to a series of small local jobbers who would supply the growing number of retailers. Unlike other systems of distribution for other products or even those formerly (and still currently predominantly) used for comic books, there would be no national coordination. The larger retailers became the wholesalers.

With the growth of the new specialty market many new publishers arose from the wholesalers and retailers and even a few from just plain fans. No one really had any business sense or particular expertise but they tried to learn. And there was quite a bit of cross-fertilization. One of the first of the new publishers went to work for Marvel Comics to handle their sales program. Another who had only published fan magazines became business manager for DC while still another fanzine jockey handled their sales program. The Marvel sales person left to be replaced by someone else who worked with fanzines. This was the early stage and the middle stage of the industry. First growth and opportunity came

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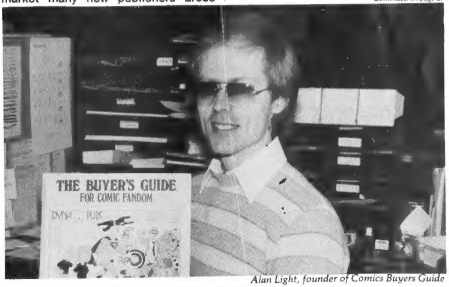


Alan Light, founder of Comics Buyers Guide

LAST MINUTE NEWS ITEM

Marvel Comics is now planning to sell comic books directly to Waldenbooks, bypassing both their normal system of local independent wholesalers and their direct market speciality wholesalers. The transaction will most likely be handled through Curtis Specialty Sales, a Division of Curtis which in turn is a division of Cadence Industries, the parent corporation of Marvel Comics.

In an interview with **The Comic Buyer's Guide**, Carol Kalish, Marvel's manager for direct sales, stated, "the independent distributors were supposed to be servicing them." And went on to estimate that half to two-thirds of the Waldenbooks stores across the nation were already carrying comics—and that a tenth of those stores were already being serviced by direct distributors. It would be interesting to learn what both the independent and the direct market distributors think of the new arrangement between Marvel Comics and the retailer.

Comics Consumer Guide

MARVEL

Titles shipping May 1 on sale May 24

☐ **Daredevil #210**—Kingpin and Crossbow team up with Micah Synn. O'Neil/Mazzucchelli/Bulandi.

☐ **New Mutants #19**—Part 2 of trilogy featuring Mystical Bear/God. Claremont/Sienkiewicz.

☐ **Tarzan Of The Apes #2**—Part 2 of the film tie-in with "Greystoke". DiVono/Evanier/Spiegle.

☐ **The Thing #15**—The Thing meets a civilization of Things. Carlin/Wilson/Sinnott.

☐ **Machine Man #1**—Machine Man is revived in 2020 to battle Baintronics, Inc. DeFalco/Trimpe/Windsor-Smith. Limited, Mando.

☐ **Secret Wars #5**—Colossus is injured and romance continues. Shooter/Layton/Beatty. Limited, Mando.

☐ **West Coast Avengers #1**—New team is formed consisting of Hawkeye, Mockingbird, Tigra and Iron Man. Stern/Hali/Breeding. Limited, Mando.

☐ **Conan The King #24**—Mad Zandra featured. Zelenetz/Simons/Isherwood. Cover painting by Kaluta.

Titles shipping May 8 on sale May 31

☐ **Amazing Spider-Man #256**—Spider-Man is severely injured. DeFalco/Frenz/Rubinstein.

CONAN THE KING #24

☐ **Captain America #297**—Villain, the Son of Zemo pays a visit. DeMatteis/Neary.

☐ **Crystar #9**—Bekk is transformed into crystal. Duffy/Villamonte/Simons.

☐ **Indiana Jones #21**—Armheim Ring story continues. Owsley/Ditko/Bulandi.

CAPTAIN AMERICA # 277

☐ **Power Pack #2**—The Snarks and Mr. Carmody team up. L. Simonson/Brigman/Wiacek.

☐ **Thor #347**—Lorelei tricks Thor into drinking love potion. Simonson.

☐ **Sub-Mariner #1**—Villainess Dragonwing is introduced. DeMatteis/Budiansky/Bulanadi. Limited, Mando.

☐ **Savage Sword Of Conan #103**—Fleisher/Mayerik. Cover by Jusko.

Titles shipping May 15 on sale June 7

☐ **Marvel Age #18**—Mando, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **The Avengers #247**—The Eternals guest. Stern/Milgrom/Sinnott.

☐ **Conan The Barbarian #162**—Jergal Zadh and the Brotherhood of the Falcon. Fleischer/J. Buscema.

☐ **G.I. Joe #27**—Revealed: Why Snake-Eyes never speaks. Hama/Springer.

☐ **Incredible Hulk #299**—Hulk reverts to savagery. Dr. Strange guest stars. Mantlo/S. Buscema.

☐ **Marvel Tales #167**—Reprint "The World Of Doctor Strange" from Spider Man Annual #2. Lee/Ditko.

☐ **Power Man/Iron Fist #109**—A new villain, the Reaper appears. Rowlands/LeRocque/Mushynsky.

☐ **Rom #58**—The Dire Wraiths. Mantlo/S. Buscema/Candido.

☐ **X-Men #185**—Storm loses her powers. Claremont/Romita, Jr./Green.

☐ **Dreadstar #12**—Dreadstar gets a new costume. Starlin. Baxter paper.

☐ **Marvel Fanfare #16**—"Skywolf". World War II aviation adventure. Wolfman/Cockrum/Sinnott. Direct Sales Only, Baxter paper.

☐ **Epic Illustrated #25**—Horror story by Berni Wrightson.

☐ **Marvel Superspecial #30**—Adaptation of "Indiana Jones and the Temple Of Doom". Michelinie/Guice.

☐ **Marvel Superspecial #31**—Adaptation of "The Last Starfighter". Mantlo/Blevins.

Titles shipping May 22 on sale June 14

☐ **Alpha Flight #14**—The Mermen stir up trouble. Byrne.

☐ **The Defenders #135**—A new villain appears, Blow Torch Brand. Gillis/Perlin/DeMulder.

☐ **Fantastic Four #270**—Terminus continues causing trouble. Byrne.

☐ **Iron Man #186**—Relocates to California. O'Neil/McDonnell/Mitchell.

☐ **Marvel Team-Up #145**—Iron Man vs. Blacklash. Isabella/LaRocque/Esposito.

☐ **Peter Parker #94**—Kingpin gets a new hitman—Silvermane. Milgrom/Mooney.

☐ **Star Wars #87**—Princess Leia and the alliance meet a new villainess. Duffy/McLeod/Palmer.

☐ **Temple Of Doom #1, #2, #3**—

MARVEL FANFARE #16, "SKYWOLF"

Continued on page 42

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

By T. I. Pavaro

HOW MUCH ARE YOUR COMICS WORTH?

"But what are comics really worth!" I virtually shouted to my two companions as we ate lunch at the local Bürger Delite. Sitting across from me was John, a good friend of mine and owner of the local comic book store, while beside me sat one of my oldest friends, Jim, an accountant and long-time collector of comic books.

John had just finished explaining to both of us that despite the fact that he sold old comic books for up to hundreds of dollars per book, and despite the fact that an average back issue costs several dollars in his store, he can only offer a dime when he buys a comic from someone who brings in a collection to sell him.

His reasoning went something like this:

JOHN: I just don't know how long I will have to sit on the book when I buy it.

JIM: But don't collectors like myself come in to your store every day of the week and don't you know which series we are interested in? You must know the hot ones from the dogs, don't you?

JOHN: Of course I do. But none of them sell too fast. Everybody is spending their money on the new books. There's just too many of them. It's hurting the back issue sales.

Jim: But don't most of the collectors and a lot of the readers like the older stories as much as the ones coming out now? Don't they think that the early Marvels by people like Kirby and Ditko or Adams or so many others are worth reading?

*JOHN: Of course they do (*he likes to say that a lot and by now he was clearly fidgeting in his chair). *They cost too much for them to buy though. Unless they really want them for their collection they are just too expensive.*

JIM: But I have seen books in your store that have been there for the years that I have been coming. Why don't you lower the price?

JOHN: I can't afford to because they have to earn back the money I have invested in them.

JIM: But you only have five or ten cents in them!

JOHN: But they tie up money and space because they take so long to sell and I never know how many actually will finally sell. So I have to make up for it on the ones that do. Besides I never charge more than the Price Guide anyway.

T.I.:Price Guide? What's that? (I learned a long time ago that I find out a lot more in these conversations by playing dumb).

JOHN: The Overstreet Price Guide, *of course (*as he gave me a look that suggested that I had just walked in from some other world). *It's compiled every year by Robert Overstreet and a number of expert consultants along with a bank of computers. It's just the bible of the comic book world.*

JIM: Everyone knows about that book *(he added while joining John in his odd stare at me).*

T.I.: Then that is the book that everyone goes by?

CHORUS: Naturally!

T.I.: And how exactly are the prices derived?

JOHN: They survey the dealers across the country and find out what the current selling prices for the books are and they use that to compose the new figures which they then print up each year or in the updates which come out during the other half of the year.

T.I.: Then they learn the prices by surveying the dealers that sell their books based on the prices that are listed in the Guide?

CHORUS: Right.

T.I.: Then why do prices ever change if the prices that they survey are merely

reflecting the prices already in earlier Guides?

A CHORUS OF PUZZLED LOOKS

T.I.: Are you the only comic shop that is having trouble selling back issues?

JOHN: No! My store is one of the busiest around.

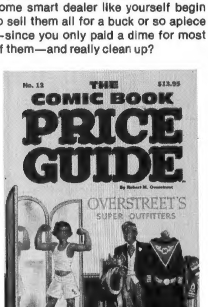
T.I.: Then no one is selling the back issues?

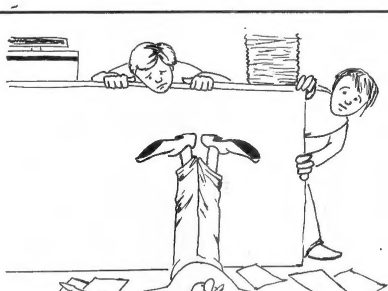
JOHN: Not very much. It's a real problem.

T.I.: And the prices are still going up based on the listings in the Guide?

(Jim was beginning to show real interest as he began to see what I was driving at. It was dawning on him that the books which he had paid lots of money for and stored very carefully for a long time were probably not going to pay for his retirement in fifty years.)

JIM: Then why do you charge so much for the books if they just sit on your shelf and no one buys them? Couldn't some smart dealer like yourself begin to sell them all for a buck or so apiece —since you only paid a dime for most of them—and really clean up?





JOHN: But the bags they're in cost too much... and the acid free cardboard backings.

JIM: You mean the stuff they're stored in costs you almost as much as the book?

JOHN: Yeah....

JIM: Then why don't you sell them without the bags, just loose, but for a buck or so?

JOHN: Because then they wouldn't be collectors books.

JIM: But they would still be bought by a collector, stored and if he wanted he could buy the bag from you for an additional price, couldn't he?

JOHN: Yes. Maybe that would work. Some day someone will have to try it. Maybe I'll get around to it.

T.I.: Do the reprints coming out from the publishers sell well?

JOHN: Yes, people really want to read the books in the original but the prices are just too high so they buy the reprints. It really hurts the sales on the back issues. I wish they would stop that.

T.I.: How much do the reprints sell for?

JOHN: About $1.50 to $2.00.

T.I.: Fifteen to twenty times more than you pay for most of the originals? Then if you priced the original at the same price as the reprint which would sell?

JOHN: Probably the original.

JIM: I would much rather own the original book than the reprint even though they are on much better paper.

T.I.: Then the books which just sit on your shelf would turn into cash which you could use to expand the business or just take a profit.

JOHN: I would like to show a profit for once. We really got hurt in the deluge of new product, particularly when the old books stopped selling. Maybe I'll try that some time.

JIM: (*This time directly to John.*) Do you mean that all of those books I have been buying from you for years... But what about the Overstreet prices... You really only pay a dime for the books you buy....

At that point I couldn't bear to look at Jim so I made an excuse and headed back to the office. I just hate to see a grown man cry.

HEROES

by James Van Hise

THOR

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Back in the early days of Marvel comics, when the Fantastic Four had only just added uniforms to their look and Spider-Man didn't even have his own magazine yet, they were still in the tentative transition from producing monster stories to producing super-hero stories. Thus when they introduced their next super character, he fought the Stone Men from Saturn in his origin as they were not at all unlike the monsters which had been populating *Journey Into Mystery* and other Marvel titles during this period.

But even in this origin tale in *J.I.M* #83 (August 1962), Thor stood out just as uniquely as did the F.F. and the Hulk in their own titles. He was unusual and at least for a time seemed as though he could have been any of us. All he needed do is strike the cane he'd found on the ground and he'd be transformed into Thor. Don Blake just happened to be the one who found and now owned the enchanted cane just as Tony Stark just happened to be the one wearing Iron Man's super armor. That perception of the character would change but it would be a slow, strange process.

The creation of Thor at Marvel is another case of conflicting histories. In *Origins of Marvel Comics* by Stan Lee (Simon & Schuster, 1974), Lee details the pattern of the character's creation in some detail.

Following the creation of the Fantastic Four, the Hulk and Spider-Man, Lee felt that the only character he could come up with that would be stronger than any of them would be something he called "super-God", but he didn't think the world was quite ready for that. Why he was stuck on thinking only in terms of strength is uncertain as he followed up Thor with characters which were by no means stronger, but were definitely different and creative, such as Ant-Man and Iron

Man.

But the Super-God concept kept nagging him. "There was no way we could present a strip featuring God without possibly offending any reader of almost any religious affiliation," said Lee, "Or could we? A thought suddenly struck me. During a recent radio interview, the talk-show host and I had been discussing our Marvel stories and he had referred to them as twentieth-century mythology. It was his feeling that we were creating an entire contemporary mythos, a family of legends that might be handed down to future generations just as those we had read as children had been handed down to us. One of the points he made was that the Marvel heroes had some of the charisma, some of the flavor, of ancient fairy tales, of ancient Greek and Norse mythology. And that was what grabbed me. That was the answer.

"I couldn't—I wouldn't—do a series featuring God as a comic book hero. But I could—and would—do a series featuring *a* god as a comic book hero. After all, ever since man has walked the Earth there have been legends of gods and their goddesses, their problems, their battles, their triumphs and their defeats. Okay. Since we were the legend makers of today, we'd simply take what had gone before, build on it, embellish it, and come up with our own version of the continuing saga of good versus evil—god-wise, that is."

And yet Jack Kirby tells a slightly different version. One must recall that Kirby did a short-lived feature for Timely called "Mercury", which was very similar to Marvel's Thor of almost twenty years later. "Yes," Kirby explained, "and I also did a version of Thor for D.C. in the Fifties before I did him for Marvel. He had a red beard but he was a legendary figure, which I liked. I liked the figure of Thor at D.C. and I created Thor at Marvel because I was forever enamored of legends and I knew all about these legends, which is why I knew about Balder, Heimdall and

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Odin. I tried to update Thor and put him in a superhero costume, and he looked great in it and everybody loved him, but he was still Thor."

Regarding his inception of Thor, Stan Lee stated that, "As far as I can remember, Norse mythology always turned me on. There was something about those mighty, horn-helmeted Vikings and their tales of Valhalla, of Ragnarok, of the Aesir, the Fire Demons and immortal, eternal Asgard, home of the gods. If ever there was a rich lode of material into which Marvel might dip, it was there—and we would mine it."

On Kirby's contribution, Lee was uncharacteristically laconic in *Origins of Marvel Comics*, devoting a couple of quick sentences to this aspect whereas he had run on at length about every other facet of the character. It should be recalled that when this book was written in 1973, Jack Kirby was working for D.C., having parted company from Marvel because, "If I did come up with an idea at Marvel, they'd take it away from me and I lost all association with it."

What Lee had to say about Kirby's initial creative association with Thor was this: "As for Jolly Jack, he had done his usual sensational job. He made the Thunder God look just like a God of Thunder should. It took a lot of courage, too. You've got to remember that Thor had long blond hair before it became fashionable among us mere mortals—before the Beatles had made the scene. Had anyone but Jack Kirby been the artist, it's barely possible that the ol' hammer thrower's masculinity might have been in question. But we managed to carry it off."

Zounds!

While Lee takes credit for the concept and the plot, he credits his brother, Larry Leiber, with the script. (Lee's real name was Stanley Martin Leiber and only later did he legally change his name to what had only been a pen name for his comics work, Stan Lee.) Stan even goes out of his way to credit Larry with having come up with the name of Thor's hammer as an *Uru* hammer. Leiber wrote only the first few issues of Thor's adventures, up through *Journey Into Mystery* #91. Then someone named "R. Berns" took over the scripting and produced some fairly routine stories.

Kirby maintains that he plotted Thor from the start. "I wrote all of the stories that I drew, right from the start. I put notes next to each panel to indicate what was happening and what was being said. I always did it that way. Someone else just translated into captions and dialogue. That's the truth and it's up to you whether you want to believe it."

This is backed up further by a story told by Mark Evanier in a recent APA (Amateur Press Association publication; a type of very limited distribution fanzine). He related how for years Kirby has been plagued by people wanting to get the same kind of sweetheart deal as Kirby's writer that Stan Lee had. This persisted when Kirby was at Marvel as well as long after. The fact is that Kirby would plot, draw and hand in the art with liner notes for the scripter to follow. Thus the writer had very little work to do as Kirby had

Continued on Page 54

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

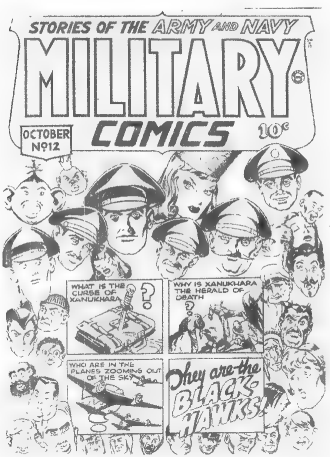
By Ron Goulart

THE QUALITY GANG (PART IV)

Military Comics, the last of the Quality Comic Group's original quartet of titles, was launched during the summer of 1941 just a few months before the United States entered the Second World War. The magazine was edited by Will Eisner and offered its prospective readers "Stories of the Army and Navy". This cover slogan was rather loosely interpreted and, as we'll see, some fairly unconventional warriors were to be found doing battle on *Military's* bright four color pages.

The undisputed star was Blackhawk. Created by Eisner and drawn by Charles Cuidera, he led off every issue from the first on. Unlike some of the heroes tapped by Quality for stardom (such as the Firebrand in *Police Comics* and the Ray in *Smash*), Blackhawk won over his audience and justified everybody's faith in him. In the first issue we learn that he is a Polish aviator whose brother and sister are killed by the Nazis. Escaping his occupied homeland, he acquires a mysterious island to use as a base and recruits a band of freedom-minded outcasts and fugitives to wage aerial guerilla warfare against Nazi Germany.

What Eisner had cooked up here was a World War II version of King Arthur and his Round Table, with bits of the Foreign Legion, the Flying Tigers and possibly Captain Midnight and his Secret Squadron tossed in for good measure. It was an appealing concept. As the saga unfolded from issue to issue you got to know the rest of the Blackhawks—Olaf, Hendrickson, Andre, the now-controversial Chop Chop, etc. The distinctive Blackhawk planes, described as "revamped Grumman skyrockets," were first seen in issue #2. With issue #12 the appearance of the Blackhawks, as well as that of their planes and all the artillery, improved greatly. Reed Crandall, with an assist


STORIES OF THE ARMY AND NAVY
MILITARY
COMICS
OCTOBER
Nº12
10¢
WHAT IS THE CURSE OF KANUKHARA ?
WHY IS KANUKHARA THE HERALD OF DEATH ?
WHO ARE IN THE PLANES ZOOMING OUT OF THE SKY ?
They are the BLACK HAWKS!

from Alex Kotzky in that issue, took over the drawing chores. Crandall, one of the best illustrators of the period, seemed more at home with the Blackhawk crew than he did with any of the superheroes Quality stuck him with and he did an excellent job on the feature. He stuck with Blackhawk, off and on, for the next several years.

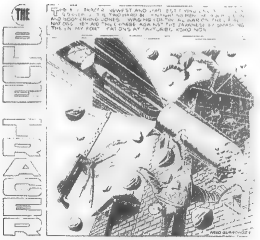
One of the biggest differences between today's comic books and those of forty and more years ago is in the number of features to be found in an issue. Nowadays you usually get one character, or team of characters, per book, but back then eight or ten wasn't unusual. All comic books had sixty-four pages to fill and a story ran anywhere from eleven pages down to four. So a magazine like *Military* had a lot more to offer than just Blackhawk. The early issues were divided into a 32 page Ar-

my Section promising "Stories of Military Action on Land", and a 32 page Navy Section that contained "Stories of Naval and Air Action on the Sea". A very wide range of material was packed into each of these sections.

There were not one but two pun-named teams to be found in the Army Section, Loops and Banks and Shot and Shell, and neither had much of anything to do with any army. The former, dealing with the air adventures of Marine flyers Loops McCann and Banks Barrows in the Orient, was drawn by Bob Powell. Klaus Nordling wrote and drew the other strip, which featured a diminutive conman named Colonel Shot and a big blond hayseed pilot named Slim Shell. They got involved in breathless, less than serious intrigues with spies, Nazis and assorted other scoundrels all over the war-torn world. Although I was as militant and gung ho as any other preadolescent kid in wartime America, I always enjoyed Nordling's stuff better than some of the more serious military fare in the magazine.

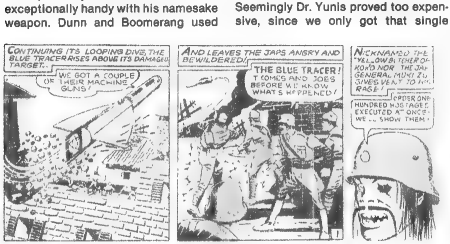
The nearest thing to a super hero was to be seen in The Blue Tracer. The Tracer itself was a super airplane, "newest and deadliest flying engine of war". Its inventor and pilot was a fellow named Bill Dunn and he wore a blue costume, complete with cape and a tin hat. His sidekick was Boomerang Jones, a husky Australian lad who was exceptionally handy with his namesake weapon. Dunn and Boomerang used the Blue Tracer to wage highly unconventional warfare against the Japanese. The dependable Fred Guardineer illustrated the strip for its entire sixteen issue run.

In the seagoing half of the book you found such strips as *Yankee Eagle*. The strip was handsomely drawn by William A. Smith, but wasn't too dazzling in the story department. "Jerry Noble, the son of Senator Noble, is apparently a ne'er-do-well," explained a caption, "but in reality, with the aid of his pet eagle Sam, and his amazing friendliness with birds and animals, he aids the government in its war on naval spies." Smith was especially good at depicting the sundry ships, animals and winged creatures the narratives required. Capable artwork, however, wasn't enough to keep the feature afloat and it was replaced in #9 (April, 1942) by Phantom Clipper. This one dealt with a mysterious clipper ship that prowled the Pacific and "whose speed and destructive ability mystifies her enemies". The skipper was a handsome fellow named Tiger Shark and the cook was a Hindu called Jewaldri. The final panel in the October, 1942 issue announced, "Because of the tremendous popularity of our Hindu friend, Jewaldri, we have gone to the great expense of hiring Dr. S.M. Yunis, world famed Hindu linguist, to teach our readers the Hindu language". A vocabulary of ten words followed. Seemingly Dr. Yunis proved too expensive, since we only got that single



lesson. Fred Kida, who's now doing the daily *Spider-Man* newspaper strip, was the artist.

The high point of the Navy Section (though what it had to do with things naval I still can't figure out) was *Death Patrol*. Brightly drawn and written by Jack Cole, the strip dealt with "five convicts and one, Del Van Dyne, former airlines pilot, thrown together by fate. They fly to England and fight for the RAF! Acting independently, they become a foreign legion of the air: THE DEATH PATROL, most daring of all British warbirds!!" Because of the similarity of the basic notion to that used in *Blackhawk*, this has been called an out-and-out parody of the other strip. But Cole was at least half way serious at this point in his career and *Death Patrol* was really more a variation on the theme. Had this been an out-and-out spoof, it wouldn't have been so grim. The group comes by its nickname because in each adventure one of them gets killed. Cole only turned out three episodes before turning the thing over to David Berg. This *is* the same Berg who does the bland suburban stuff for *MAD*, and yet it isn't. Back then he had a loose, animated cartoon style that made his *Death Patrol* stories look like wild, hallucinatory Looney Tunes. After Berg, the Patrol took a vacation of several issues and returned in #20. They returned as clowns pure and simple, playing everything for laughs. Cole returned, too, for a few more go-rounds, but never matched his earlier work.


CONTINUING ITS LOOPING DIVE, THE BLUE TRACER RISES ABOVE ITS DAMAGED TARGET.
WE GOT A COUPLE OF THEIR MACHINE GUNS!
AND LEAVES THE JAPS ANGRY AND BEWILDERED!
THE BLUE TRACER! TOMKINS AND JONES BEFORE WE KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED!
NICKNAMED THE "YELLOW BELLIED POLTROONS" BY THE JAPANESE GENERAL, MUNT ZU SUMES, WHO WANTS TO MAKE EXAMPLE OF THEM!
HUNDRED MUSKETEERS EXECUTED AT ONCE! WE'LL SHOW THEM!

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STRIP SEARCH

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

COMICS INTO FILM

© Adair Pictures

Everybody knows that comics and movies have much in common.

Both are art forms that combine words and images to tell a story. Both are popular art forms having their origins in the late 1890s. Neither was considered, in its earliest days, "respectable", comics beginning as a circulation-building gimmick, movies as a sideshow attraction. Both are today being taken more seriously, but are still the johnnys-come-lately of the arts, having been made to bear the terrible stigma of having made their mark before that despised audience known as "the masses"

The influence each has had on the other is enormous. Chester Gould tells of going to the movies in the '20s and '30s to soak up story-telling devices; Alex Raymond, Milton Caniff, Roy Crane and Will Eisner were obviously students of movies, adept at re-shaping film technique to comic strips. Today, all of these men are declared influences by major film directors, from Federico Fellini to George Lucas. (Eisner-admirer William Friedkin announced a Spirit TV movie several years ago; typically, it remains unproduced—as does the since-announced animated Spirit feature from producer Gary Kurtz.)

Yet while these two great popular arts, with their numerous

similarities, have had enormous impact upon each other, they have seldom been able to effectively merge forces.

When George Lucas admits his "Star Wars" evolved from a desire to bring *Flash Gordon* to the screen, the first screen Flash Gordon comes to mind: a serial. There were three Flash Gordon serials, in fact, and while popular in their day —and in ours in nostalgic revival— they helped set the dangerous precedent that comic strips, particularly adventure comics, were useful only as Saturday matinee material. Strictly for kids.

The movies have rarely taken the comics seriously. Hollywood has either seized upon comics as fodder for children's movies, or has jumped on the bandwagon of a successful strip, to cash in. This attitude emerged in the era of silent movies—with comics used as the basis of animated cartoons and one- or two-reel shorts, but seldom full-length features. When the popularity of a strip demanded feature-length treatment, the result was often an unhappy one, like *Bringing Up Father* (1928), in which a badly miscast Marie Dressler as Maggie wallowed in a soap opera plot that had little to do with George McManus.

Despite Hollywood's exploitative approach to adapting comic strips, the results were occasionally rewarding, as in the long-running Blondie series. Although B pictures, the Blondie films were generally well done and faithful to their source—in the early entries particularly, Chic Young's comic strip seemed to have come to life (the stated goal of most of the comics-adapted films, but rarely the result). Arthur Lake's Dagwood, though somewhat broadly played, and an even bigger klutz than his strip counterpart, is a memorable screen creation; Penny Singleton simply *was* Young's flapper turned housewife, and to have seen these films is to permanently attach the voices of Lake and Singleton to the characters when reading *Blondie* in the papers.

Still, these films—like the similarly faithful-to-its-source but lower budget Joe Palooka series, at Monogram—were "programmers", and while early entries in a series like Blondie were often of rather high quality, that quality would slip over the course of a series. *Beware of Blondie* (1950), the final entry in the series, is an unintentionally apt title for a film that demonstrates how the once inventive series had come to rely on stock situation comedy plots and uninspired slapstick.

As TV came to replace the movie-going habit in the late '40s and '50s, B films like the Blondie series (and other, non-comics-related series like Andy Hardy and The Thin Man) faded away, though many of them continued into television; both Arthur Lake and Joe Kirkwood, for example, repeated their Dagwood and Joe Palooka characterizations in unimpressive early '50s TV shows. The same is true of Ralph Byrd, who repeated his Dick Tracy characterization for the small screen.

Byrd's Tracy, though restricted to Republic serial and RKO B features, was another memorable screen creation. A limited actor, Byrd nonetheless had considerable presence—not unlike Clayton Moore's convincing Lone Ranger performance—that tied him to the role for life. (Byrd died in 1952, at age 43, after completing one season of the *Dick Tracy* TV series.) Morgan Conway, a better actor, and with his own presence and authority in the role, played Tracy for RKO in the two most lavish Tracy features, *Dick Tracy* (1945) and *Dick Tracy Meets Cueball* (1947). The four RKO Tracy features, which use film *noir* techniques and Gould-like villains to help capture the spirit if not the letter of the strip, may be the best of the low-budget adaptations of strips to screen.

Byrd's Republic serials (the first in 1937, the last in 1941) were nicely mounted and had wonderful action sequences. Despite this—and Byrd's commanding presence —they remain *serials*, and were aimed at a Saturday afternoon audience.

These serials, and others, taken on their own terms were (and are) entertaining, particularly the Republic ones. Byrd and Buster Crabbe were ideal screen realizations of Dick Tracy and Flash Gordon, respectively. Some serials, however, (the Columbia serials, particularly) made a mockery of their subject matter; even Republic had that bad habit of making arbitrary changes and omissions in the format of the strips (Tracy, for example, was a G-man, not a city cop, and all secondary characters except Junior were absent).

For the most part, the serials simply capitalized upon the highly

Continued on page 60

THE ARTISTIC LIFE

By Stephen Bissette

THE SWAMP THING PAPERS: PRELUDE

Hello! Allow me to introduce myself... I'm Stephen Bissette, former 'Gud Boox' columnist for this magazine, current penciler on DC's *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing,* freelance cartoonist at large since my second year at the Joe Kubert School for Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc., way back in... let's see... '77? God, have I been at this *that* long?

Not long at all, really. I'm definitely still a tenderfoot in the industry, though I've done a fair share of work I'm proud of, and managed to accumulate my share of cuts and bruises in the process. If you're familiar with any of my cartooning, or with the previous book columns in this 'zine, you might have surmised that my interests tend toward the unusual and the bizarre. If you haven't found that out for yourself, you're about to, and I hope you find it all as interesting as I *have* to. It is, after all, my living.

I won't bore you with my life story; there's a short bio in *SOTST #25,* if you're at all interested, along with those of my collaborators on the book, John Totleben and Alan Moore. And I would prefer to let my work (some of which graces these very pages) speak for itself, though the point of this column's future installments will be to give you a peek 'behind the scenes' at how I work on *Swamp Thing.* Among other... THINGS.

"Where do you get your ideas?"

Ah, the $64,000 question.

Well, I can't really answer that too well. Perhaps you'll glimpse a near-answer or two herein, perhaps not. What I hope to do is bring you through as much of the creative and selective process involved in working on this particular monthly comic book as I can. I am not much of a writer, so you may find me stumbling over verbalising certain concepts. Hopefully the wealth of visual material I shall be showing you to illustrate my ramblings (along with the help of my editor's corrections and suggestions) will pick up the slack.

©Stephen Bissette

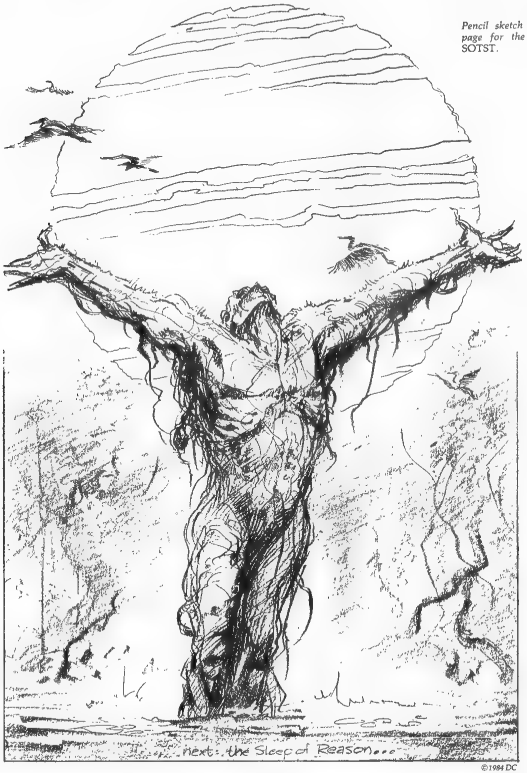
©Stephen Bissette

What I have discovered in working on my first regular four-color comic is that one must become *obsessed* with the book's key characters if the work is to be satisfying to oneself and, hopefully, the readers. There are just too many long hours at the board, too many pressures, demands and extra unexpected hassles connected with such a task to take the matter lightly. Like it or not, the workload will swallow up your life. If the character and the book become a real obsession, a telling bond between the creator and the created (i.e. the 'product') is formed, and a core of pleasure quickly develops. This pleasure is the anchor through the storms of deadlines, production disasters, schedules, etc... If you truly care about the character, you can weather all!

Obsession with a character is very difficult to communicate; one tends to get off on tangents and gibber a bit much, digging into the character's past, plotting possible courses to steer him/her through in future issues. Those are all things you may have to bear with me on. Such is the nature of obsession.

And make no mistake, I am a bit obsessed with *Swamp Thing* of late.

I am not alone, however. I share my obsession with my friend and confederate-in-arms, John Totleben. John's bio is in *SOTST #25,* too, so I won't go into the particulars. We have been friends since our meeting during the Joe Kubert



Pencil sketch of a splash page for the end of an SOTST.

NOTE. This column offers the views of Stephen Bissette, not necessarily of DC Comics or NMP.

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This is the inked version of the same drawing shown on the preceding page. Notice the difference in detail between the pencil and the ink.

School years, and John, like myself, is a lover of the grotesque. He is also a stunning artist. With all media and techniques... but with a pen, the man is a magician. We went after the art chores on *Swamp Thing together*, having worked out our preferred method of teamwork (my penciling and John's inking) before approaching the editor (and co-creator of the Swamp Thing) Len Wein. The collaboration has been great fun. When Marty Pasko left the book for greener pastures (writing for television: *Mr. T* Saturday morning cartoons and *The A-Team*), Len brought in British writer Alan Moore

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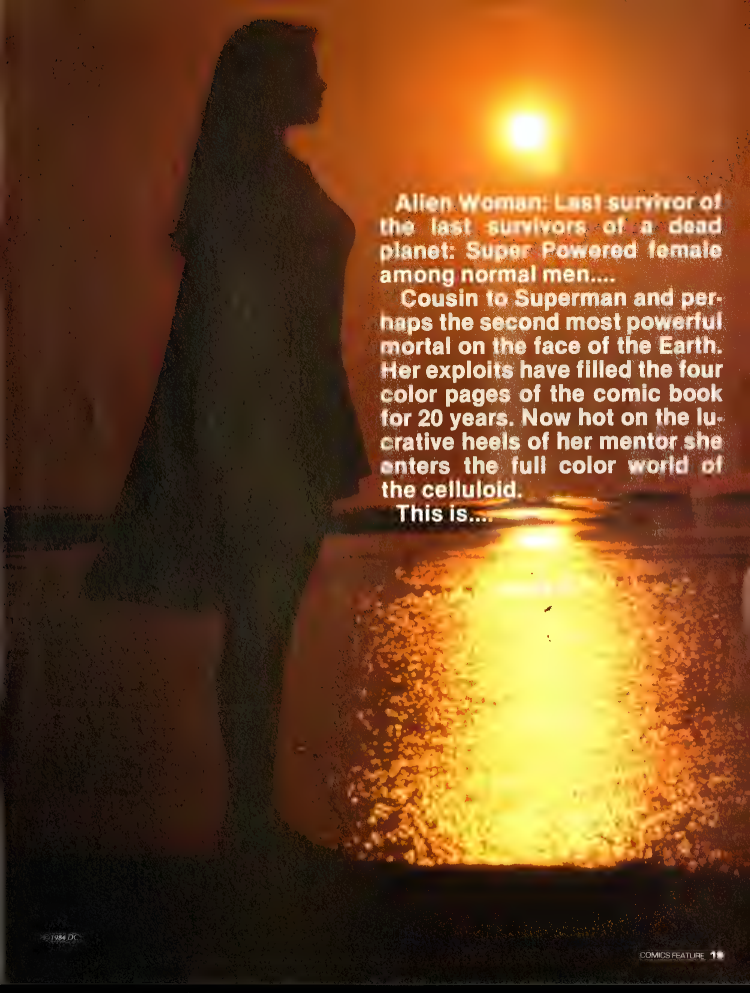

Alien Woman: Last survivor of the last survivors of a dead planet: Super Powered female among normal men....

Cousin to Superman and perhaps the second most powerful mortal on the face of the Earth. Her exploits have filled the four color pages of the comic book for 20 years. Now hot on the lucrative heels of her mentor she enters the full color world of the celluloid.

This is....

© 1984 DC

by James Van Hise It is ironic that Linda Danvers, her mortal identity, has numbered acting in a television soap opera among her many and varied jobs. Perhaps even odder is that not only has she been an actress, playing full grown and highly attractive woman sex symbols, but a college counselor and several other professionals as well. And now once again she is only seventeen. But if one can imagine the multitude of powers this woman is laden with—supervisions of various types, superbreath, superhearing, supermemory, superspeed, flight, superstrength—then we can certainly ignore the previous history and imagine the story as the movie relates it. And most viewers will be encountering her for the first time. Even if they are familiar with her cousin, veteran of numerous movies, cartoons and serials, they probably have not made her acquaintance before.

Perhaps it's because of different audiences with different expectations, but larger than life heroes who are female have just not fared as well in film as their two-fisted male counterparts. This is doubtless because brawny heroes appeal to a wide-ranging audience while heroines are admired by a more narrow one. While men may admire and identify with the heroics of a Superman, and women will admire the character on a different level, the appeal is altered when the super-antics are performed by a female. Men tend to admire women for their physique rather than for being more macho than they are. It has long been argued around Hollywood why studios don't make more films in which a woman has the lead. Perhaps *Supergirl* (and later this year *Sheena*) will shape the future of this type of film.

While *Superman* took very few liberties with the Superman legend, Supergirl departs from her origins a little more so than her cousin's story did.

The origin of Supergirl revealed that a small chunk of Krypton containing Argo City survived the explosion of its home world. But whereas the comic book story in *Action #252* had Kara born and grow up in Argo City before meteors destroy the lead shielding protecting them from the Kryptonite core of the asteroid, events are slightly altered in the film.

Those who survived the destruction of Krypton on this tiny chip of the planet, rallied in Argo City under their new leader, Zaltar (Peter O'Toole). The only two existing power sources for the small populace on the planetoid are Omegahedrons. During an experiment being conducted by Kara (Helen Slater), one of the two Omegahedrons is lost in space. Kara must quickly rectify this matter and undo the damage she has inadvertantly wrought. Otherwise every one of the survivors of Krypton's destruction will themselves succumb to the icy depths of space, including Kara's parents (Mia Farrow and Simon Ward).

But rather than escaping to Earth to elude the clutches of death in Argo City, Kara's journey by spaceship to our world is an attempt to retrieve the precious Omegahedron. Upon arriving here, she discovers that in one large way her task has been made easier because of the superior powers she finds that she possesses under the radiation of a yellow sun.

Offsetting this, though, is the fact that the incredible power source has fallen into the hands of the villainous Selena (Faye Dunaway) and her shrill and unpleasant companion, Bianca (Brenda Vaccaro).

Adopting a secret identity, Supergirl presses her search for the

Omegahedron which brings her into direct conflict with the wiles and the power of Selena. The final confrontation comes when Selena unleashes an invisible creature of destruction against the girl from Krypton. This results in a climax brimming with surprises and the special effects we've come to expect from these painstaking cinematic recreations of what before could only be shown on the four-color page of a comic book.

One interesting sidenote is that the costume for the movie was to originally sport a sweatband across Supergirl's forehead. The justification when the comic book company protested was that it was a reflection of the bands worn by Kryptonians (although that band has only appeared on males). Despite the protests of the comic book's editor the change was made. The irony comes in when the movie company rechanged the costume prior to finishing the film, removing the headband, and therefore leaving only her appearances in the comic books illustrating her appearance in that fashion. Needless to say, the comic book people are rather upset with the movie people.

Nineteen year old Helen Slater makes her feature film debut in the title role of Supergirl. A graduate of Manhattan's High School of the Performing Arts, Helen Slater has already enjoyed considerable experience and exposure to show business.

The daughter of a public broadcasting executive who has produced television specials on Barishnikov and Horowitz, Helen Slater portrayed Maria in *The Sound Of Music* at the Great Neck, Long Island, High School. She appeared as Lola in a summer camp production of *Damn Yankees* and from the age of 15 she spent most of her vacations with the Hampton Playhouse.

During her junior and senior years at the High School of Performing Arts, the 5'8" actress also wrote both music and lyrics for her school's principal touring productions.

Helen Slater was selected over several hundred candidates when she landed the role of Supergirl. As the accompanying photos indicate she seems very much in keeping with the modern look of the character as opposed to the adolescent look that Supergirl had in the Sixties.

Marc McClure is appearing as Jimmy Olsen, the well-meaning but often bumbling Daily Planet news photographer. McClure has appeared in all three of the Superman films, *Supergirl* thus marking his fourth appearance as the character.

Peter O'Toole as Zaltar is one of the most highly respected actors of our time and his position in *Supergirl* is as the cornerstone much the same way that Marlon Brando was in *Superman*. O'Toole has been nominated for the Oscar as Best Actor six times and his many memorable roles include the films *Lawrence Of Arabia*, *Man Of LaMancha*, *The Ruling Class*, *The Stunt Man* and *My Favorite Year*.

Oscar winning actress Faye Dunaway has been considered one of the finest actresses in films ever since her role as Bonnie in the film *Bonnie And Clyde*. She has since played a wide variety of parts in such films as *Network*, *Little Big Man*, *Mommie Dearest* and *The Wicked Lady*. The screen has been graced with this woman's awesome talents all too infrequently.

The cast is rounded out with a fine crew of supporting talent including Hart Bochner, comedian Peter Cook and Maureen Teefy.

Other than through uses of stock footage or other camera tricks, Christopher Reeve will not appear in the film even though his character is established as being Supergirl's

Unlike her cousin, Superman, Supergirl has gone through several costume changes. (Right) in the costume she now wears and (left) in the original costume.

© 1984 DC

© 1984 DC

Helen Slater brings Supergirl to the big screen. While there have been many versions of cousin Superman, this is Supergirl's first step out of the four-color page.

cousin. This is supposedly because Reeve came to dislike working for the Salkinds and resented their dismissal of director Richard Donner. Reeve credits him with being solely responsible for the excellence of the first Superman motion picture. This is unfortunate because the concept of survivors of the death of Krypton is certainly a more interesting storyline than the one used in the third Superman film. Wouldn't Superman want to do all he could to assist and/or rescue these survivors of his home world's destruction? The fact that some of them are related to him just intensifies the story possibilities. But alas this will not come to pass and his absence will be sorely missed from this storyline.

The director of *Supergirl* is Jeannot Szwarc who brought a genuine lyrical grace to the production of *Somewhere In Time* (which ironically starred Christopher Reeve). He came to prominence when he was brought in to rescue the foundering production of *Jaws II*. Swarc previously did television work such as an episode of *Night Gallery* in the early Seventies.

The film is an Alexander Salkind presentation with Ilya Salkind serving as executive producer. The film is produced by Timothy Burrill from a screenplay by David Odell.

Principal photography was completed in August 1983 after four straight months of filming on foreign locations at Pinewood Studios.

Comic fans will be interested to note that preproduction art and designs for the film were done by Mike Ploog. Ploog has previously done work on *The Thing*, *The Dark Crystal* and on *Superman II* and *III*. He now resides in England due to the number of film commitments he's had over the past year.

Supergirl is due for release from Warner Brothers in July and that's when we'll see if the film really flies.

It is somewhat sad and perhaps more than a little odd that the release of the Supergirl movie will mark the end of the Supergirl comic book. Her book has been cancelled and she will share the pages of a new title with the adventures of her cousin as a boy, Superboy. It seems that although she is popular enough to launch in a multimillion dollar spectacular she is not able to keep a small run comic book alive. Perhaps the success of the movie will serve to alter her fate in her original and finest medium, the four color page.

COMICS FEATURE DIRECT MAILS

Each price includes an additional charge for shipping and handling. Orders outside of the U.S. and Canada must add $1.00 per book additional. All payments must be in U.S. dollars. Do not send cash, just checks and money orders. Please bear in mind that we must wait for your entire order to arrive before they can be sent and that smaller publishers are known for their unfortunate delays in shipping books. We cannot fill an order until the publisher fills our order and they rarely meet their schedules.

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- ☐ New Teen Titans #2 ..... $2.00
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- ☐ Thriller #10 ..... $2.00
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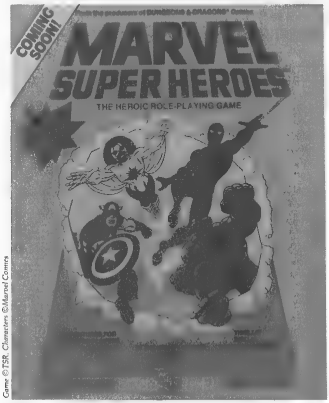
Games

By Raymond Greer



Game ©TSR Characters ©Marvel Comics

A note of introduction: Comics Feature *has asked me to write a continuing column about superhero games. I currently work for a game company. My contributions here are aimed at supporting the hobby as a whole. Although I am not above bias, hopefully the insiders view I will provide will compensate for that.*

ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS

Marvel Comics Group and TSR Inc. (the publishers of Dungeons & Dragons among other games) have completed negotiations on the long awaited *Marvel Role-Playing Game.* Designers Jeff Grubb and Steve Winter have spared no effort in giving this game the "feel" of the comics. Only small parts of the game were shown at the annual trade show, but from what I saw, this product will be one to pick up.

The game ($13.50) will be available in May. The rules are short, with a quick to learn system that allows for fast, simple play. Also included is a 48 page campaign book and wonderful game map of New York City. The card stock hero counters are great and will do until the 25mm figures are released. The first adventure is with Spider-Man and his friends battling the minions of Dr. Octopus. The adventure is well written, getting even first time role-players right into the action.

"The Breeder Bombs" ($6.00) will be the first module, featuring the X-Men. The next two projects to be released will be a Referee Shield with a mini-module and "Time In A Bottle" featuring the Avengers.

This game will mark the most expensive licensing agreement in the hobby industry. Over one hundred thousand dollars was committed as a cash advance and a healthy percentage given to Marvel on top of that. For this TSR received not only the role-playing rights to the Marvel universe but also the rights to cast lead playing figures and Endless Quest-style choose-your-own-adventure books. Further, Marvel offered to help with the distribution of the new game through its direct retail outlets. TSR has also been granted the right to commission original art work that it retained the rights to. In the old days artists granted all rights to their publishers so Marvel has quite a stock of morgue drawings to enliven these new adventures.

The road to the Marvel licensing agreement was muddy and twisted. After over two years of wheeling and dealing (and not all with TSR) the Marvel Superheroes will finally have a game of their own. I won't bore you with all the "dirty laundry", but one funny quote came up at Marvel. I was there 18 months ago making a presentation. I asked why TSR didn't already

have the license. Marvel told me they had offered the license to TSR but they had rejected the idea "due to insufficient markets". Times have a habit of changing.

The TSR/Marvel game may well do for superheroes what D & D did for fantasy games. I believe it was worth the wait.

My only question is what about DC? There is a strong rumor around the hobby industry that Parker Brothers (Monopoly) has picked DC up. There is also some activity at Mayfair games, who received the Epic license. Could another Superhero game be on the rise?

SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

There have been other, less earth-shaking game releases that the superhero gamer should be interested in:

Most Wanted: A detailed look into the C.H.E.S.S. files on some of the most powerful villains in the *Villains & Vigilantes* game system. The book not only covers individual villains but also sinister groups of evil doers. It is the newest release for V & V published by Fantasy Games Unlimited.

Bad News For Dr. Drugs: Teenage superheroes try to clean up drug traffic at their highschool. This *Superworld* adventure shows a different side of the comic book world, dealing with the problems and perils of being a young and inexperienced hero. It is usable with *Champions* as well. The art was done by Butch Guice. "DNFDD" was published by the Chaosium.

The Great Super Villain Contest: Pits some of the most powerful villains in the *Champions* game system against the heroes, each in a test to see who is the most powerful villain of them all. As to the reason for the contest and the prize at stake, I will not say. But the adventure is so far reaching in scope that it could make the basis for a whole new campaign. "GSVC" is usable with *Superworld* as well and was published by Hero Games.

Issue #31 of *Different Worlds* magazine (published by the Chaosium) has the game stats for the "Teen Titans" in all the major game systems currently available. Issue #33 is a special DNAgents issue with some nice artwork.

...IT'S HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME

Freedom of choice is the heart and soul of role-playing games. The feeling of active participation and successful accomplishment is what makes role-playing so popular. With this freedom also comes a great responsibility. The goal is mutual enjoyment. It is up to each participant to see that this goal is achieved.

To abandon my soap box for a moment, let me say that in eight years I have seen just about every element that makes up a good or bad adventure. I thought I'd give you a few suggestions to help you over the rough spots of playing superhero games:

1) Suspend your disbelief: Don't worry that the world around you is not the same one you are used to. The same imagination that allows you to believe in a hero who can leap tall buildings in a single bound should also allow the normal people to "vanish" out of the scene when the trouble starts. The police should always arrive just a bit late and property damage should always look worse than it is. In the world of superheroes the laws read just a bit differently.

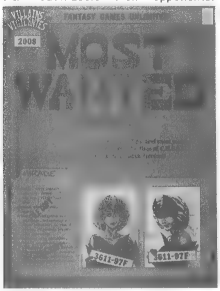
The laws of physics should not be as unforgiving as they are in the real world. Supertypes always throw around objects that would buckle under their own stress and weight. Cars and lamp posts are simply built differently, that's all. The impossible becomes the possible and the improbable becomes commonplace. These are the "limits" of the genre.

2) See through the eyes of your character: Often it is hard to separate what information you as a player have from what your hero would know. This can often mean "mistakes", new heroes with no reputation being taken for villains; the bad guys slipping away under the cover of confusion; etc. All these things are classically comic book and only add to the feeling of the game when handled correctly. This system can also provide you with information that you don't have about the world around you. Even though you don't recognize the villain menacing the innocents, your hero might due to "his" study of such subjects. Never be

afraid to ask questions.

3) Keep to the Comics Code: This means heroes don't kill people. It is one of the few things that make you better than the villains you fight. Bloody, descriptive violence, off color language or sexual episodes may not only embarrass other players but they also betray the spirit of caped crime fighting. This is not to say that things like this don't happen. But like good Greek plays, all of this type of graphic action happens off stage. In comic books it is handled off the edge of the panels. The same should be done in a gaming sense. Don't dwell on the distasteful unless you are trying to make a powerful statement.

4) Don't beat lightning off with your fists: Each hero has his own set of strengths *and* weaknesses. Not everyone has bulletproof skin or can tap the "power cosmic", nor should they. Each hero should have a firm conception first and a group of superpowers second. This will more easily allow you to give the hero a distinct personality. "Breakable" heroes are often the most challenging to play because they must out-think rather than out-muscle their opponents.



Weaknesses, too, should be part of your hero to define the scope of his abilities. Every game system has loopholes that permit characters beyond the level of play balance or reason. Don't look for and exploit them. To be incredibly good with no flaws offers little challenge to the player, difficulty in adventure design for the games master and no real basis for interacting with other players.

5) Never argue with the G.M.: There are times when the G.M. has misinterpreted the rules as you know them. More often than not it is because a story element depends on it. If you think there has been some mistake wait for the G.M.'s attention, mention the event and the rule governing *once*. The G.M. will either fix the oversight or explain why things happened the way they did *after* the adventure. Too many good games have bogged down just because this common courtesy was not observed. Like the writer of a comic book, the G.M. can sometimes take "literary" license and see that things come out well for the sake of the story even if it means it's at the expense of a player now and again. It really all works out in the end.

6) Don't play to win: The only winning involved with superhero games is the thrill of beating the bad guys and the improvement of the heroes' crimefighting abilities. Superheroes stress cooperation and team work not self-enrichment. The reward for all is that the good guys always win in the end. They may lose along the way but in the last panel it'll be the heroes who are standing bruised but victorious. Role-playing games should work the same way. Winning should be a difficult challenge but should be attainable. With everyone shooting for that goal (G.M. included) the games are enjoyable, escapist fantasy.

All the above suggestions may seem pretty obvious at first. It is surprising how many good players forget one or

two in the excitement of a game. If you remain true to the spirit of the comics you can never go wrong. Heroes come in all shapes and sizes and the "comic book" world they battle injustice in is a little better for each one of them.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you want more information about the new releases mentioned in this column send a Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope to the addresses below. Please mention that you read about them in *Comics Feature.*

Fantasy Games Unlimited, P. O. Box 182, Roslyn, NY 11576

Chaosium Inc., P. O. Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706

Hero Games, 92A 21st Ave., San Mateo, CA 94402

BIO: Raymond Greer is the sales manager of Hero Games. He is a regular columnist for the *Adventurers Club Magazine*, occasional contributor to *Different Worlds Magazine* and book reviewer for Bradley publications. He brings with him eight years of experience in the role-playing market. It is his hobby as well as his vocation.

Continued from page 5

from new businesses and expansion of old ones. Then it came from moving back and forth between existing companies.

The latest stage involves lots of companies going broke and quitting publishing for one reason or another. But whatever their stated reasons they had to stop what they were doing. Texas Comics in Texas, Capital Comics in Wisconsin and Comico in Pennsylvania have virtually ended their publishing programs or gone out entirely.

Now people are suing each other. Rich Buckler (Red Circle Comics/Archie Adventure Group) is suing the publisher of Fantagraphic and Fantagraphics. Alan Light, the former owner of The Comic Buyers Guide is suing Gary Groth and Fantagraphics. And Michael Fleischer was already suing Gary Groth, Fantagraphics and Harlan Ellison.

First Comics is suing Marvel Comics. Their reasons as officially stated are because "World Color's charges for printing product since November, 1982, and Marvel Comics' actions in flooding the marketplace with new publications in an attempt to ward off new competition which has threatened to undermine Marvel's monopoly of the comic book field," are damaging to First Comics as they see it. Further, "First Comics alleges Marvel Comics has taken similar market-flooding actions when faced with the prospect of serious new competition.

"Consumers only have a finite amount of money to spend, and retailers in the competitive marketplace must purchase their comic books on a no-return basis: with its monopolistic position, Marvel is flooding the field, retailers cannot afford to give new people a fair chance."

In other words, First Comics is hurting because Marvel Comics has exercised its popularity and position of dominance to publish more books. This echoes the complaint which we reported from First two issues ago when they also stated that Marvel was not playing fair and should limit the number of publications it released. Why Marvel would want to do this is not explained and why anyone else would have the right to tell any publisher what is an appropriate amount of books to publish is also questionable. Some years ago, the novelist Ayn Rand, in her book *Atlas Shrugged*, projected a near-socialist world in which the U.S. government, acting on behalf of business interests, stipulated how much a company was allowed to sell and protected every company's right to exist and make a profit. It was a black utopia which resulted in the collapse of the world economic system. It is very unlikely that a Ronald Reagan dominated Justice Department will see this as a wise program.

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Marvel's comment on the whole matter? "Marvel Comics has been asked several questions regarding a recent lawsuit against Marvel and a major comic book printer by an independent publisher of comic books in the midwest. Stuart J. Freedman, vice president, secretary and counsel of Marvel's parent corporation, Cadence Industry Corporation, made the following statement on behalf of Marvel:

'Marvel Comics Group and its attorneys have not completed their analysis of the Complaint served by First Comics nor have we formally answered the Complaint as of this time. However, we can state that Marvel conducts its business in a perfectly legal manner and we are confident that, should our conduct be tested, it will be vindicated by the Courts. Marvel does not believe that the proper place to discuss or adjudicate law suits is in the press. The Courts are the only proper place. Therefore, no further comments will be made about the lawsuit or the subjects covered therein until the litigation has terminated.' "

The last is a backhanded reference to the unusual practice of First Comics in sending out a press release stating its position on filing the lawsuit. It should be interesting to see what happens when it does arrive in the courts and what, if any, further lawsuits are launched between entities in the marketplace. It should also be interesting to see how many of the comic book companies now publishing will still be doing so by the end of the year.

And to think that the entire field was created when a few fans decided to exchange opinions on the latest adventures of their four-color superheroes.

MURDOCH LOSES TUG-OF-WAR

In a follow-up to our report of last issue we have learned that Rupert Murdoch, the Australian publisher, has given up his attempt to take over Warner Communications and thus DC Comics. He has agreed to sell back what shares he does hold in the corporation—at a considerable profit.

CARLIN APPOINTED EDITOR, BUDIANSKY SHIFTS FOCUS AS MARVEL FANFARE LINES UP MATERIAL

Mike Carlin has been appointed Marvel's newest editor. He will handle The

Fantastic Four, Rom, Dazzler, The Thing and other unspecified titles. His assistant will be Mike Higgins.

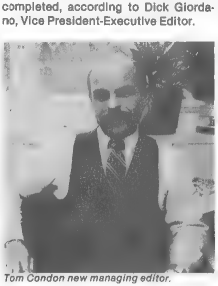
Bob Budiansky will thus be freed to shift his attention to special projects including movie adaptations, the Scott Adams/Adventure International Questprobe limited and the Marvel Super Heroes role-playing game from TSR (see games column for more on this). He will work closely with Tom DeFalco as his immediate superior.

Meanwhile Marvel Fanfare has lined up an impressive range of material. Marv Wolfman and Dave Cockrum's Skywolf will be run in #16 and 17. It has been in inventory for some time and is an updated Blackhawks.

Bill Mantlo and Mike Mignola will run their version of the Sub-Mariner. Roger Stern, Frank Miller and Joe Rubenstein are doing a Captain America. Jim Starlin has written and drawn a story pitting The Hulk against The Thing, involving memories of classic Lee/Kirby. Future issues will also include Cloak and Dagger by Rick Leonardi, Tom Salmons, Kerry Gammill and Bill Mantlo.

DICK GIORDANO HAILS DC'S EDITORIAL STAFF AS "COMPLETE"

The year-long process of revamping DC Comics' editorial staff has been completed, according to Dick Giordano, Vice President-Executive Editor.



Tom Condon new managing editor.

Robert Greenberger new associate editor

The keystone of the new editorial look at DC Comics is the Managing Editor. "As Executive Editor, my role is mostly planning for the future," explained Dick. "That involves the acquisition of new properties and contracting for the appropriate talent. I'm also very involved in our promotional activities. Therefore, I needed a strong individual to serve as Managing Editor, actively managing the material on a daily basis, insuring deadlines are met, and interacting on the Editorial Department's behalf with the rest of the company. Tom Condon does that job admirably."

Tom Condon joined DC Comics in June 1983. Tom had been Assistant Managing Editor at Delacorte Press, a division of Dell Publishing, prior to joining DC, as well as being administrative editor for Seymour Lawrence Books. Before joining Delacorte, he was a teacher specializing in reading skills in Boston.

Alan Gold, formerly Managing Editor of Hearst Books, a trade-publishing division of the Hearst Corporation, joined DC as associate editor to Marv Wolfman on *Star Trek, The Omega Men* and *Vigilante* and is full editor on *Blue Devil* and *Wonder Woman*. In recent months, *Thriller* and *JLA* have been added as assignments, in addition to limited series and specials.

Janice Race, Associate Editor to Gerry Conway and Roy Thomas, is also new. She joined DC Comics in September 1983 after six years as an editor at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in New York City. There she worked in HBJ's reading department, developing fiction and non-fiction for children in grades kindergarten through 8. She worked for two and a half years at Matthew Bender Inc., a medical and legal publisher. She will become a full editor on *World's Finest Comics*.

Associate Editor Robert Greenberger is the latest addition to DC Comics' editorial staff. Formerly Editor of *Comics Scene*, he also served as Associate Editor of *Starlog* magazine and as Managing Editor of the Starlog Sports Group. Bob's first assignment at DC will be to work with Len Wein and Marv Wolfman on *The DC Directory*.

Proofreader Brenda Pope is the last of the new additions to DC's Editorial staff. Brenda returns to a staff position after having worked free-lance for 2½ years. Her clients were Warner Books, Harlequin Romance and Dell Publishing. Her skills include editing, copy editing and proofreading. Prior to working free-lance, Brenda was a copy editor at Dell Publishing.

"We've also changed some editorial assignments around, reflecting con-

Brenda Pope, experienced proofreader.

Janice Race, Associate Editor

straints both of time and space," Dick noted. "Len Wein, now that he's writing *Green Lantern* and developing additional series for us, will be spending less time in the office and so Alan Gold will be handling *Justice League Of America* and Karen Berger will be editing *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing*. All free-lance editors will have an associate editor to be an in-house liaison. And Nelson Bridwell, who continues to serve as Julie Schwartz's Consulting Editor will be spending more time at home as a free-lance writer, developing his own series, as well as working on an official history of our company."

Following is an updated list of DC Comics titles and the editor(s) responsible for them:

Marv Wolfman, George Perez, Editors; Janice Race, Associate Editor:
Tales Of The Teen Titans
The New Teen Titans

Alan Gold, Editor:
Justice League of America
Wonder Woman
Thriller
Blue Devil

Julius Schwartz, Editor; E. Nelson Bridwell, Consulting Editor:
DC Comics Presents
Superman
Supergirl
Action Comics
The New Adventures Of Superboy

Gerry Conway, Editor; Janice Race, Associate Editor:
The Fury Of Firestorm
Sun Devils Maxi-series

Marv Wolfman, Editor; Alan Gold, Associate Editor:
Vigilante
Omega Men
Star Trek

Andy Helfer, Editor:
Atari Force
Super Powers Mini-Series

Roy Thomas, Editor; Janice Race, Associate Editor:
Arak, Son Of Thunder
Infinity, Inc.
All-Star Squadron

Len Wein, Editor:
Batman
Green Lantern
Detective Comics
Camelot 3000 Maxi-series

Cary Bates, Editor; Nicola Cuti, Associate Editor:
The Flash

Murray Boltinoff, Editor; Nicola Cuti, Associate Editor:
G.I. Combat

Nicola Cuti, Editor:
Jonah Hex
New Gods
The Best of DC Digest

Joe Kubert, Editor; Nicola Cuti, Associate Editor:
Sgt. Rock
Arion, Lord Of Atlantis

Karen Berger, Editor:
The Saga Of The Swamp Thing (beginning with #25)
The Legion Of Super-Heroes
New Talent Showcase
Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes

Ross Andru, Editor; Nicola Cuti, Associate Editor:
Warlord

Janice Race, Editor:
Blackhawk (beginning with #274)
World's Finest Comics (beginning with #307)
J'Emm, Son Of Mars Maxi-series (Dick Giordano, co-editor)

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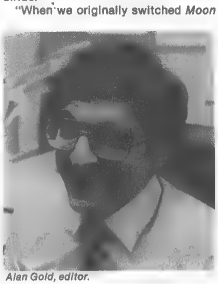
Atari Force is a trademark of Atari Inc.

MARVEL RESTRUCTURES DIRECT SALES MARKET APPROACH

Marvel Comics has restructured its approach to the direct sales market, expanding the Epic Comics line and cancelling its original three direct-only titles *Moon Knight, Ka-Zar* and *The Micronauts.*

The Epic line has begun expansion with the debut of *Alien Legion.* Several more titles have been announced including *Crash Ryan, Black Dragon, Void Indigo, Time Spirits* and *Six From Sirius.*

"When we originally switched *Moon*

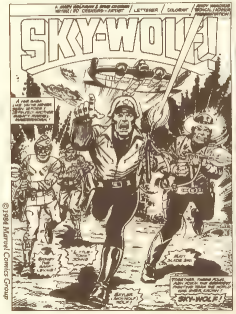


Alan Gold, editor.

Knight, Micronauts and *Ka-Zar* to direct-only, it was as an experiment," Marvel Editor in Chief Jim Shooter said. "That experiment was a limited success."

Since that time Marvel has been gauging consumer response, Epic Comics Editor Archie Goodwin said. That effort resulted in the additional line for Marvel, and in its flagship titles, *Dreadstar* by Jim Starlin and *Coyote* by Steve Englehart.

"Now that we have a better idea of



what the direct sales consumer wants, Epic can better meet those demands," Goodwin said.

However, Marvel is not abandoning its original direct market experiments.

"The reason *Moon Knight, Micronauts* and *Ka-Zar* were not completely successful is that they were basically mass-market books which we tried to tailor for the direct market," Shooter said.

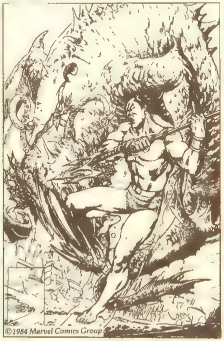
Rather than cancel the books outright, Marvel decided to suspend publication of the books in order to revamp them, he said.

The revamped *Moon Knight* and *Micronauts* series have been scheduled to return in June as regular, 60 cent newsstand distribution titles. *Ka-Zar* is still cancelled.

MARVEL ANIMATION

A quick accounting of activity at Marvel Productions explains their recent expansion into an additional facility. The studio has delivered a third season of *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* to NBC as well as premier season of *Dungeons & Dragons*, a co-production with Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corp., to CBS. (Variety called *Dungeons & Dragons* "one of the strongest cartoons on the schedule" and dubbed Marvel's animation "superior".)

In addition the studio is immersed in a number of first-run syndication assignments, several with projected air dates of September, 1984. Currently in production are programs based on Hasbro Industries, Inc.'s G.I. Joe (a second five-part mini-series). My Little Pony and Transformers, all co-productions with Sunbow Productions, Inc., and five half-hours based on the Gallavants, a co-production with Mediafare Entertainment Group.



Sub-Mariner limited series begins in May, courtesy of J.M. DeMatteis, Bob Budiansky and Danny Bulanadi. ©1984 Marvel Comics Group

SPOTLIGHT

GREYSTOKE: THE LEGEND OF TARZAN

By Cynthia Broadwater

LORD OF THE APES

Tarzan as seen in the comics has always been closer to the character created by Edgar Rice Burroughs than the Tarzans presented on the screen. Hugh Hudson *(Chariots Of Fire)* intends to change this with *Greystoke: The Legend Of Tarzan, Lord Of The Apes.*

Johnny Weissmuller is the best remembered screen Tarzan. Russ Manning drew the "ultimate" Tarzan for the strips. Christopher Lambert as Tarzan gives us a man scarred by his life in the jungle. A man who has walked the thin line be-

(Below) Kala, Tarzan's ape mother, shows her new "son" to members of her troupe. (Right) Christopher Lambert as Tarzan. © Warner Brothers

Continued on page 47

The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society will celebrate its 50th Anniversary by awarding its special "Forry" award to Julie Schwartz at the 1984 World Science Fiction Convention in Anaheim, California. Earlier in the summer, he will receive the Jules Verne Award for Lifetime Achievement at Skycon in Asheville, North Carolina.

Both of these are rather unique awards to be given to a comic book editor. They indicate that not only do these prestigious organizations consider Julie to be at the top of his field and one of the most talented men in the comic book industry but something more as well.

Interview by John Peel

JULIUS SC

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"Mort Weisinger and I are completely responsible for the whole fan scene."

In his office at D.C. Comics, Julius Schwartz leant forward with a grin, having laid claim to starting the entire field of science fiction fandom. "I think that if you're the first, you're held responsible! Of course, if we didn't do it, someone else would have. But we did it." He pulled a face, to show that he wasn't completely serious. But in many ways he is correct; though a quiet figure in some ways, Julius Schwartz is one of the most important figures in both science fiction and comics.

He was an agent for some of the most prominent early names in the science fiction field—names like Ray Bradbury, Otto Binder, Eric Frank Russell, Alfred Bester and Stanley G. Weinbaum. From that field, he entered comics, and helmed many of the best books in the Golden Age. He helped to make the Silver Age of Comics possible. He made the biggest and best changes in *Superman* and *Batman.* He was responsible

for the classic *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* team-up stories and he brought back many of the Golden Age heroes in new guises, including The Flash, Green Lantern, the Atom and Captain Marvel.

By pure co-incidence—when I interviewed him, it was February 21st, 1984, forty years to the day since Julius Schwartz entered the employ of National Periodical publications....

But how did it all begin? Julius Schwartz remembers it this way, "When I was in college, I worked on the college newspaper as an associate editor to an editor who was later probably one of the most famous editors in the United States—Norman Cousin. He's also known as Norman Cousins—for some reason when they mention his name they always but an 's' on it! He taught me pretty much what I know about editing—he taught me about editing, how to write headlines for a newspaper and so on. He later became the editor of *The Saturday Review Of Literature* and was also involved in United Nations work. And so on. He's written

Under Julius Schwartz Superman was freed from the chains of kryptonite.

HWARTZ

two great books on how to survive without the aid of a doctor.

"I went to City College in New York, and from there I was involved in science fiction in the late twenties. I was about sixteen years old, and was a big reader of what had been earlier known as the dime novel. They dealt with Frank Merriwell and Nick Carter. I ran out of reading material, so I asked a friend of mine, 'Do you have anything for me to read?' He wanted an exchange, so I gave him Frank Merriwell and the Carters, and he gave me a copy of *Amazing Stories*. From that time, I was hooked.

"There was a letter's department in *Amazing* announcing the organisation of a science fiction fan group called the Scienceers. I wrote applying for membership, but they said that I couldn't join until I was sixteen. So on that momentous day in 1931, I went to a meeting of the Scienceers, and became very friendly with one of the other members, Mort Weisinger. We got along well together. A big thrill for me was to write science fiction, but an even bigger thrill was to meet an editor of science fiction."

THE SOLAR SALES SERVICE

"I distinctly remember going up to *Amazing Stories*. The editor at that time was T. Connor Sloane, who must have been well into his eighties. He had a little sign on his desk from *Old Man River:* 'I'm tired of livin', and 'feared of dyin'. He insisted man would never be able to get to the Moon! A rocket wouldn't have enough power, nothing to push on... and he was an editor of science fiction! He was also one of the editors of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He was even an assistant or secretary

COMICS FEATURE

POSTER NO. 2

Before I took over Batman was all robots and Martians. I never read those stories. I didn't know that Batman never carried a gun! It was called to my attention...after it had appeared in print!

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Schwartz brought back The Flash as a comic fan who took his name from the original Flash.

to Thomas Edison.

"This made Mort all excited about writing, and he sold his first story to T. Cannot Sloane. It was called 'The Price Of Peace'. In the meantime, we got to know a lot of writers and artists and so on, so Mort got an idea. He said that we ought to go into the agency business. I wanted to know what the point was, so he explained. 'When a writer writes a story he lives out of town, and he mails it to *Amazing Stories*. If it's rejected, it has to go all the way back to California. So he sends it to *Wonder Stories*. Then it goes back and forth, because they send it in blind. They don't know what the editor wants. Now we talk to the editors, and he can find out if they want an interplanetary story of about six thousand words, or if they want this or that. Then we can relay this information to the writers. And of course we can become their agents and collect the usual fee of 10%.'

"So we did. We always believed in alliteration—as I said, Mort's first story was called 'The Price Of Peace'—so we became the Solar Sales Service.

"We rounded up a number of writers —Edmond Hamilton, Otto Binder (who also wrote with his brother as Eando Binder), eventually John Russell Fearn, Alfred Bester, Ray Bradbury... I helped Eric Frank Russell sell his novel *Sinister Barrier*. And I also helped very much Stanley G. Weinbaum, who I consider to be very, very good." he enthuses.

A WEINBAUM ODYSSEY

Julie Schwartz continues, "The editor of *Astounding Stories*, F. Orlin Tremayne, had read Weinbaum's 'A Martian Odyssey' and he told me that if I could get any story from Stanley G. Weinbaum, he would buy it sight unseen. Well, I didn't know who Weinbaum was, or where he lived, or anything. Now, 'A Martian Odyssey' appeared in *Wonder Stories*, and the editor of *Wonder Stories* was Charles D. Horning. Horning was only seventeen years of age. How did he get the job? He copied Mort and I and put out a magazine called the *Fantasy Fan*, dealing mostly with fantasy and weird fiction, as compared to ours, which dealt with science fiction. He sent it in to Hugo Gernsback. At that time Gernsback was looking for an editor because his managing editor, David Lasser, was leaving, and so he got the idea of calling Charlie Horning and in-

terviewing him. Charlie was very knowledgable about science fiction, so Hugo Gernsback gave him a job. At seventeen, he was the youngest science fiction editor of all time.

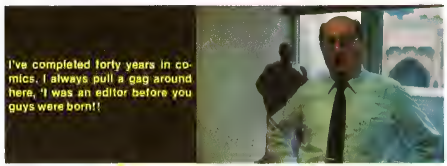
"So anyway, Charles D. Horning had bought 'A Martian Odyssey'. I knew Charlie very well, I was even best man at his wedding. So I said to him, 'This Stanley G. Weinbaum, this great writer, you don't think that's the first story he ever wrote?' He says, 'You're kidding!' So I said, 'What address did he give you?' So Charlie looks up the address —Milwaukie, Wisconsin—which of course I kept in my head. But I said, 'Milwaukie? That's where Ralph Milne Farley lives!' Ralph Milne Farley wrote the famous Radio Planet stories, and his real name was Roger Sherman Hoare, a very well known lawyer. His ancestor had signed the Declaration of Independence. 'Weinbaum,' I said, 'is Roger Sherman Hoare!' Charlie was almost convinced, but I didn't press it. Anyway, I wrote Weinbaum, and he sent me stories for the next year and a half until he died.

"I say it now, but I predicted then that he would have been as great as H.G. Wells. Then one day I got a telegram from Raymond Palmer, editor of *Amazing Stories,* who also lived in Milwaukie. He informed me that Weinbaum had died of cancer of the throat.

"We put together a special memorial volume, in which Ray Palmer wrote a beautiful introductory dedication, but Weinbaum's widow didn't want it to appear, it was too personal, too intimate. Someone else wrote another one, another pulp writer from Milwaukie. But about five or six copies were printed with that special dedication. It's an extremely rare volume. In the meantime, we collected some of the works that Weinbaum had written but never sold. One was called 'The New Adam', one was called 'The Black Flame'. All those things, I was involved in.

FANZINES

"I didn't get into the fact that I had started a fanzine before this. Mort and I not only became agents, but put out what is considered the very first fan magazine. Mort and I are completely responsible for the whole fan scene. I think that if you put out the first, you're held responsible! Of course if Mort and I didn't do it someone else would have done it. But we did, and it was called



Before Schwartz took over Batman it was all robots and outer space adventures. He returned it to the familiar Bat-foes.

The Time Traveller. One day I just sat at the typewriter and said, 'We're putting out a fan magazine', and I called it *The Time Traveller.* I spelt it with two 'l's' because that's the way that H.G. Wells spelt it. And I wrote a one-page biography of Edward 'Doc' Smith, who wrote the *Skylark* stories. Also some news items that we knew about.

That looked great, but Mort and I were only young—sixteen—and we didn't really have confidence in ourselves. So we wanted someone to be the editor who would really know what it was all about. Well, one of the big fan-letter writers at the time was Allen Glasser, and we asked him to become the editor. He agreed. Then we wanted someone who could cover all the films coming out at this time—science fiction, *Frankenstein* and so on—so we asked Forrest Ackerman to take care of that from California. Then we needed another associate editor—I don't know why—and we picked Raymond Palmer. The magazine was printed by William Crawford, who just died." Schwartz relates in a somewhat lowered voice.

THE GOLDEN AGE

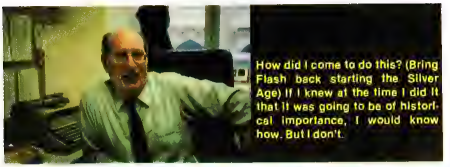
Schwartz recalls how he got into comics, "One of my clients when I was an agent was Alfred Bester, who wrote science fiction for *Unknown Worlds* and so on, and who got involved with comics. He was writing the original series of *Green Lantern.* Now All-American Comics—or Superman, we went under a variety of names!—needed another editor, so they asked Alfred Bester if he knew anyone who could handle the job. So he said, 'Well, I know Julie Schwartz, he's a great plot-man.' At that time, I was involved in plotting a lot of stories.

"Sheldon Mayer called me down to see him exactly forty years ago today —February 21st, 1944. I was interviewed by Shelly Mayer, and the next day was Washington's Birthday, so I

STARRING
DETECTIVE COMICS
BATMAN
YOU'RE NEXT, BATMAN! IN 60 SECONDS YOU'LL BE DEAD TO THE WORLD!
HOLY TOMBSTONE! I'M TURNING INTO A CORPSE!
INSIDE STORY OF THE OUTSIDER!
©1994 DC

began February 23rd. I've now completed forty years in comics. I always pull a gag around here, 'I was an editor before you guys were born!'

"So I became an editor for Sheldon Mayer—I hope he was pleased with my work. When I came in, there were a number of scripts ready for me, and I simply edited them to the best of my ability. I must say that when I edited an Alfred Bester script I was very embarrassed—I could hardly find anything to edit! Except the spelling, he was a terrible speller. Once we ran out of scripts I began plotting with the various writers. That was my function. After a few years, Shelly Mayer left, and he wanted me to take complete charge of the magazine. This involved not merely plotting but working with the artists. I complained that I knew absolutely nothing at all about art. He


How did I come to do this? (Bring Flash back starting the Silver Age) If I knew at the time I did it that it was going to be of historical importance, I would know how. But I don't.

told me, 'Don't worry about it—the readers who read the magazine know absolutely nothing about art either! Don't worry if the anatomy might be wrong, they won't know it either. If it looks wrong to you, ask the artist to change it. If the drawing looks good to you, fine. If you don't understand it, don't let the artist tell you it's a technique, or how subtle it is—he doesn't go along to the printers with the magazine. *You* have to understand and approve it.' Mind you, I didn't know *how* an artist should change it if I asked! That, generally, is my practice."

The Green Lantern/Green Arrow team-up was one of the most popular in D.C. history.

THE SILVER AGE

I questioned Schwartz about his decision to bring back *The Flash*. "How was it decided we were going to put out *The Flash* again? The so-called 'Silver Age'... It was an exciting time looking back on it, but when you're in it, you don't know it's exciting. Every now and again someone asks me: 'How did you come to do this?' If I knew at the time I did it that it was going to be of historical importance, I would know *how*. But I didn't.

"To the best of my knowledge, then. We had an editorial meeting once in a while, when we all discussed what we should do. At one point either I or someone else suggested, 'Hey, it's five, six years since *The Flash* came out. Why don't we put it out again?' So at that point the one who ran the meeting said, 'Who shall we put in charge of it?' And all eyes turned to me! So I got stuck with it.

"I gave the writing assignment to Bob Kanigher, and we talked over the plot very carefully. And the highlight of it was that he got the idea of calling himself The Flash because he was a reader of the old *Flash* comics. I thought that little touch was neat. You see, the Flash, Green Lantern and so on were originally characters from the 1940s, but when I brought them back, I completely redid them. I assumed the responsibility for *Showcase #4*. I had worked on The Flash in the forties, and he died for several years. When the decision was made to put it out again, I didn't want to put out the same Flash. I just wanted to do something entirely different.

"It was only maybe a year or two later that I got the idea of a different world, so that the original Flash, the Golden Age Flash, co-existed with the new one. (*Flash #123*) I was able to bring

them together, and that made for a whole new series of stories. Gardner Fox and I conceived that. But I did make a mistake—you see, I make mistakes from time to time!—instead of calling this Earth where the original Flash lived Earth One, I called it Earth Two, and where the new Flash lived Earth One. It should have been the other way around. And of course, to account for the fact that we here on this Earth have no super-heroes, I called our Earth, Earth Prime.

"I created the Justice League, too. It had originally been called The Justice Society, but 'society' was a *dull* word. In sports, everything is a league—there's the American league, and the National League, the Football League, the Baseball League, so I said: 'We'll call ours *The Justice League Of America.*' I kept the 'of America' part, which is a bit wrong, because some of them come from other worlds, not just other countries of our world.

"But I created the Justice League. It was part of a sequence I started with The Flash, who was very successful. I did Green Lantern (*Showcase #22*), then The Justice League (*Brave & The Bold #28*), followed by The Atom (*Showcase #34*) and Hawkman (*Brave & The Bold #34*). Something like that. I had complete control. I chose the writers and artists and so on.

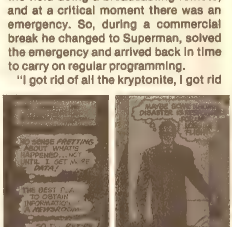
"The Atom I named Ray Palmer, after the editor of *Amazing Stories*. Raymond had an accident as a child, and never grew too tall. So I figured that was a good name for the smallest superhero of all time. Many of the names I created were based on my science fiction background.

"In the old days we did not develop the character. Every issue was self-contained. In fact there was not only one story, but frequently two or three stories in every book. They had a beginning, a middle, an end and that was it. You *couldn't* develop the characters too much. Oh, we did a few sly things. I mean, here was the Flash, the fastest man alive, and he was always late for a date. Green Lantern—he had brothers. No heroes had any family—I mean, Superman's family, for example, was dead—so we gave Green Lantern a family. He had three brothers, and the wife of one of them thought that *he* was Green Lantern!" he excitedly relates.

UP, UP AND AWAY...

Advancing the story, Schwartz reflects, "When I take over a magazine from someone else, I completely change it around. When I did *Superman* (from issue #233), I just couldn't believe he should still be involved in *The Daily Planet*. I said that young folks today don't read the newspapers. They may read it for the comics or the sports results, but they don't even know what a scoop is. So I decided to take him out of the newspaper business and put him on television, which I thought was the ideal, up-to-date thing to do. And in one of the very early stories I had him out in the field doing a broadcasting remote, and at a critical moment there was an emergency. So, during a commercial break he changed to Superman, solved the emergency and arrived back in time to carry on regular programming.

"I got rid of all the kryptonite, I got rid


TO SENSE FRETTING FROM WHAT'S HAPPENED... NOT UNTIL I GET MORE DATA!
THE BEST PLACE TO OBTAIN INFORMATION IS A NEWSROOM!
SO I'LL RETURN TO METROPOLIS AT ONCE!
WORK!

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of all the robots—and another mistake I made, they told me, was to stop Clark Kent wearing that cockamamie blue suit! He was *always* wearing the same suit, so I dressed him up in the height of fashion. So much so that *Gentleman's Quarterly*, the fashion magazine, did a write-up on him. There was even an interview on TV, on the *Today* show, on the new look for Clark Kent. But it didn't go. They wanted the same—the traditional Clark Kent.

"We put Denny O'Neil on the story, who was my top writer on *Batman* at the time, and on *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, the award-winning series. (The *Shazam*—that's the equivalent of the Oscar for films, or the Emmy award on television—there were four of those awards that I got for *Green Lantern*. And one on my own for distinguished services. I also got the Inkpot Award that's given by the San Diego Convention. I also got an Alley award, given in 1967 for the *Adam Strange* stories. I started him, gave him his name and everything else. As a matter of fact, I did an early series with the same first name, 'Adam Blake', for the 'Captain Comet' series.)

HOLY CHANGES, BATMAN!

"When I took over *Batman*, the change I made there was that he started wearing an oval around his symbol (*Batman #164*). That's an indication of when I started. I also did loads of changes with him. I just couldn't believe they'd be going down into the Batcave on a winding staircase, so I had an elevator installed. I changed the Batmobile, bringing it more up to date. Another terrible mistake I made—I killed off Alfred, his butler.

"Why did I bring him back? Because when they started to do the television show, they wanted him. So I had to bring Alfred back.

"I do have a lucky streak I like to talk about. When I took over *Batman* in 1964, I decided to go back to the villains they had neglected for a while. I did a story about the Riddler. A gentleman about to take an airplane flight had nothing to read, and he happened to pick up that comic. He was very fascinated with the Batman story, and with the Riddler. His name was William Dozier. He became producer of the *Batman* TV series. He became very excited about the idea, and there happened to be very shortly thereafter a story about the Joker. These two stories were pretty much the basis of the first Riddler and Joker stories that appeared on the *Batman* TV show. If it hadn't been for the co-incidence that I happened to do the Riddler, Batman would never have appeared on television.

"There have been a number of other things. For a year and a half I edited *Wonder Woman*—shortly thereafter *Wonder Woman* appeared on television. I did *Shazam* and shortly thereafter it appeared on a Saturday morning show. Of course *Superman* we know about. Then there's *Supergirl*, which is being finished in England now. Even *The Justice League* had a Saturday morning show. It seems as if I had a lucky streak of taking over a magazine and having it appear in either television or movies. Sheer luck.

"After the first year of *Batman*, Dozier said, 'We must do something to hype the program. Can we have a girl on the show?' I said, 'What kind of a girl do you want?' He suggested, 'Well, can we have Commissioner Gordon, for example, have a daughter and she becomes Batgirl?' So I created Batgirl in 'The Million Dollar Debut Of Batgirl' (*Detective Comics #359*) and they wrote her into the show.

"Before I took over, *Batman* was all robots and Martians. I never read those *Batman* stories. As a matter of fact, I made a terrible mistake in the very first Batman story I did. I had John Broome, one of my top writers, on the job, and he and I plotted the story very carefully, set in Greenwich Village. At a critical point in the story Batman drew a gun and held it on the crooks. I didn't know that Batman never carried a gun! It was called to my attention... after it had appeared in print!" a somewhat chagrined Schwartz confesses.

EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHY

Schwartz continued, explaining his position as an editor, "My relationship with the writer and artist is very, very close. Especially with the writer. If I didn't have the opportunity to work closely with the writer, I wouldn't have lasted in this business. True, certain editors almost let a writer have his own way: 'What's the story going to be about?' 'Oh, it'll be about a certain villain...'. Pretty much like that. That's not my way. I like to sit down with a writer and have him come in with an idea. It may or may not work, but when he leaves here, he has a story. He will come in with a situation or villain or something, and we will plot the story. To me, I give the analogy that working out a story is like working out a crossword puzzle—you start out with blank squares and you fill up the spaces until it's done. That's the way I work.

"I also will not allow a plot to be done if I *know* it's been done before. Or if it's too similar to anything we've done before. I'm embarrassed every once in a while by 'Hey, you used a title like that 23 years ago!' I can't remember every title, but I don't like to duplicate myself. As a matter of fact every once in a while I come up with a great idea and I go to Nelson Bridwell, who has a good memory on DC history. I say, 'I've had a great idea—has it ever been done?' The reason I ask that is because when Mort Weisinger and I started out, our work was very much alike, and I figure that if I thought of the idea, then Mort may have thought of the idea. And every once in a while I get, 'Oh, Mort did that twenty years ago...'.

"I did *The Justice League* for over twenty years, I did *Batman* for fifteen, sixteen, *Flash* I did for over twenty years. As long as you're creative and think of original ideas and develop the characters as much as you can... You're okay."

The movie-makers insisted that Supergirl wear a headband. The comic book was changed to match the movie, then at the last minute the movie dropped the headband, leaving DC with an unwanted headband.

SUPERMAN 400

"We're working on the 400th issue of *Superman*. This is also the 45th year. I'm putting out a 64 page anniversary issue. Anniversary issues are always different from anything else. So my idea was to do a story about how future ages and generations look back on Superman in the 20th Century. The myth, the legend.

The future may not know much concrete about Superman. Maybe it is all a legend then... And since these stories will deal with the non-traditional Superman, only their *opinion* of him, I wanted each artist who gets a chapter not to have been involved with Superman before.

"I just had a call from one of them who's doing a chapter, and he's afraid he's not going to get it done in time. I said, 'I'll kill you!' I don't want seven empty pages!

"Joe Orlando, who's our chief editor, is doing a chapter; Mike Kaluta is doing a chapter; Al Williamson is doing a chapter; Frank Miller is doing a chapter; Marshall Rogers is doing a chapter; Wendy Pini; and hopefully Jim Steranko will be doing chapters. In addition to which, I'm having a dozen pinups done by artists who were never involved with *Superman*. People like Walt Simonson, John Byrne, Mike Grell, Milton Caniff—he used to do *Terry And The Pirates* and *Steve Canyon*—Berni Wrightson... Brian Bolland was supposed to do one. Steve Ditko did one. Will Eisner, who did the *Spirit*, did one.

"When I do something, I like to do it... Well my motto is there on the wall—'Be original'. They used to call me B.O. Schwartz—'Be Original' Schwartz! That's why when I started in on *Batman*, *Superman* and all the other magazines I tried to be as original as I could." explains the editor.

FORGOTTEN HEROES

"I did a series in *Action Comics* recently in which I brought back 'heroes of DC's past'. I hope to do a *DC Presents* with the forgotten superheroes, and maybe do a follow-up with the forgotten supervillains. That's all temporary. Until I have a thing on my desk, I don't believe it's going to happen. Who knows if some of these old heroes will come back? Who knows... It's the public out there that decides. If the *Action Comics* and the *DC Presents* I'm putting out are big successes, perhaps there'll be a mini-series about them." Perhaps that would be worthwhile.

"They weren't strong enough, really, to hold their own series. I'm not sure that they're strong enough to put out a *Rip Hunter* book now, or *Sea Devils*, or *Animal Man* or whatever.

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SUPERGIRL—THE COMIC

The biggest event involving Schwartz currently is the new Supergirl movie. "We will be putting out a comic version of the *Supergirl* movie, but we worked under a handicap. First of all, we did not have enough illustrative material to work from. The book is illustrated by Gray Marrow and he did a great job. It may not look exactly like the film, but it's close.

"It starts off on Argo City, where Supergirl is a youngster. Something goes wrong with this little gem they're playing around with, and they have to get it back from Earth, where it's teleported. During the journey from Argo City, Supergirl ages about ten years, so she comes to Earth about age seventeen. It's very little to do really with what we've been doing in *Supergirl*. There have been so many different versions of Supergirl, including the current one where she's in college. She's already been a teacher, an actress in a soap opera... We have to ignore all these things. After all, this is the 25th Anniversary of her appearance, and she's only about seventeen to nineteen years old! You have to ignore these things.

"Here's another terrible thing they did to us. They wanted a change in costume—they didn't like the hotpants she was wearing—so we redesigned the whole costume, went to a lot of trouble, and they insisted we put a head-band on her! Because it was very up-to-date. 'I think that's terrible,' I said, 'it stinks, it's no good.' Sure enough, when they made the movie, they left the head-band out. In the meantime in my magazine, I have the head-band! So I gave as the explanation for the head-band that the people on Krypton used to wear them. But it was only the males, really... So here I am with the head-band, and the movie decided not to do it.

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Schwartz returned Batman to his crime fighting best

"We were sent three or four versions of the script, from which we did the story. Then the fella from England, where it's being finished, looked it over and said, 'Oh, that's been cut out of the movie... and that...' So the readers will get a bonus they won't see in the movie." informs Schwartz.

THE FUTURE

Cheerfully posing for a couple of pictures, Julius Schwartz thought a moment. "I don't think we've covered much," he told me. "Maybe you can go back, look through what you have and we could set a date for another interview. Perhaps fill it out a bit." The urge is almost irresistible; he has been involved in much, some of which we barely touched upon. The early science fiction scene; the original comic books from the Golden Age; the famous *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* series from Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams; *DC Presents*... The list is almost as long as his career. Undoubtedly by the time that another interview could be made, he'll have snuck a few more additions into the list, for he is never still. He is always on the alert to keep to his motto:

"Be original"!

Guide *Continued from page 7*

Adaptation of the movie, reprint of Superspecial #30 on Mando. Direct Market and Toy Stores.

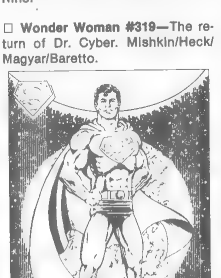
☐ **Coyote #7**—Englehart/Truog. Back-up story "Djinn" by Englehart/Ditko/Leialoha.

☐ **Marvel Superspecial #32**—Adaptation of "The Muppets Take Manhattan". Stan Kay/Dean Yeage/Jackie Roettcher.

Titles shipping May 15, on sale June 7

☐ **Justice League of America #230**—Conclusion of "War of the Worlds" trilogy. Conway/Patton/Nino.

☐ **Wonder Woman #319**—The return of Dr. Cyber. Mishkin/Heck/Magyar/Baretto.



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A POSTCARD by Perez

☐ **Atari Force #9**—The Dark Destroyer's secrets. Conway/Garcia Lopez/Villagran.

☐ **DC Comics Presents #73**—Superman helps the Flash. Bates/Infantino.

☐ **The Fury of Firestorm #27**—The Black Bison Trilogy ends. Conway/Kayanan/Rodriguez.

☐ **Best of DC Digest #52**—Cover by Hannigan and Giordano.

☐ **Blackhawk #272**—Domino II, Nazi killing machine. Evanier/Spiegle.

☐ **Vigilante #10**—Vigilante goes after his partner's killers. Wolfman/Andru/DeCarlo. Direct Sales Only, Baxter Paper.

☐ **The New Teen Titans #2**—Trigon-Raven story continues. Wolfman/Perez. Direct Sales Only, Baxter paper.

Titles shipping May 22

☐ **Arak/Son of Thunder #37**—Return of Valda the Iron Maiden. Roy & Dann Thomas/Colon.

☐ **Batman #375**—Mister Freeze chills Gotham. Moench/Newton/Alcala/Hannigan & Giordano.

☐ **The Flash #337**—Pied Piper is after the Flash. Bates/Infantino/McLaughlin.

☐ **G.I. Combat #269**—Kanigher/Trinidad and Glanzman and Cruz.

☐ **Superman #399**—Col. Future foresees no future for Superman. Kupperberg/Baretto.

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Cover for GREEN LANTERN #180

☐ **Tales of the Teen Titans #46**—Search for HIVE headquarters. Wolfman/Perez/DeCarlo & Giordano.

☐ **Omega Men #18**—Moench/Tod Smith/Tanghal. Direct Sales Only, Baxter paper.

☐ **New Gods #4**—Police Sgt. Dan Turpin goes after the Gods. Kirby/Royer. Direct Sales Only, Baxter paper.

☐ **J'Emm, Son of Mars #1**—Potter/Colan. Direct Sales Only.

☐ **All-Star Squadron Annual #3**—Thomas/Hoberg/Collins.

☐ **Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld Annual #1**—Amy Winston unleashes a terrible danger into the Gemworld. Mishkin & Cohn/Estrada & Colon.

Titles shipping May 29 on sale June 21

☐ **The Saga of the Swamp Thing #28**—Moore/McManus/Bissette & Totleben.

☐ **Green Lantern #180**—Hal Jordan quits...enter a NEW Green Lantern. Wein/Gibbons.

☐ **Sgt. Rock #392**—Sgt. Rock becomes a drill instructor. Kanigher.

☐ **Legion of Super-Heroes #2**—Levitz/Giffen/Mahlstedt. Direct sales only, Baxter paper.

☐ **Supergirl #23**—Kupperberg/Infantino/Oksner.

☐ **The Warlord #85**—Burkett/Jurgens/Adkins.

☐ **Thriller #10**—Origins of The Seven Seconds. DuBay/Nino. Direct sales only, Baxter paper.

☐ **Infinity Inc #6**—Thomas/Ordway/Machlan. Direct sales only, Baxter paper.

☐ **New Talent Showcase #9**—Direct sales only.

☐ **Blue Devil #4**—Zatanna, Enlongated Man, Superman visit. Cohn & Mishkin/Cullins.

☐ **DC Comics Presents Annual #3**—Today's Superman and Golden Age Superman vs. Dr. Sivana. Thomas/Kane.

☐ **Batman and The Outsiders Annual #1**—Introducing The Force Of July. Barr/Moore/Aparo.

Titles shipping June 5 on sale June 28

☐ **Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes #315**—The Legionnaires vs. the Dark Circle. Levitz/Shoemaker/Kesel.

JLA POSTCARD by Perez

☐ **Action #559**—A Superboy villain goes after Superman. Rozakis/Schaffenberger.

☐ **Detective Comics #542**—Batman and Robin fight Mister Freeze. Moench/Colan/Smith.

☐ **World's Finest #307**—Batman and Superman save university from destruction. Busiek/Tuska/Hannigan.

☐ **All-Star Squadron #37**—Thomas/Jones/Collins.

☐ **Arion/Lord Of Atlantis #23**—Arion returns to Atlantis and faces his brother Garn. Kupperberg/Sherman/Duursema.

☐ **Sun Devils #3**—Conway/Jurgens/Tanghal. Direct sales only, Baxter paper.

☐ **Super Powers Mini-Series #3**—Kirby cover.

☐ **Warlord Annual #3**—Resolves questions posed in annual #2. Kupperberg/Jurgens/DeCarlo.

☐ **Star Trek III Movie Special #1**—Official adaptation of Star Trek III. Barr/Sutton/Villagran.

AARDVARK VANAHEIM INC.

☐ **Cerebus #62**—Black and white.

☐ **Normalman #3**

☐ **Journey #10**—Black and white

Archie

☐ **The Original Shield #3**—"Prey" and "Reflections" plus the wrap up of the four-part origin. Martin L. Greim and Dick Ayers.

☐ **The Fly #8**—Will the Fly reveal his secret identity to the underworld? Snyder and Ditko.

☐ **Blue Ribbon #11**—Two new Black Hood adventures, one by Stan Timmons and Rich Buckler and the other by Dave Allekas and Carmine Infantino and Ed Baretto.

☐ **Little Archie #538**

☐ **Betty & Veronica #331**

☐ **Josie & The Pussycats #540**

☐ **Laugh #384**

☐ **Jughead #335**

☐ **Archie's TV Laughout #96**

☐ **Archie At Riverdale High #98**

☐ **Archie & Me #146**

☐ **Betty & Veronica Summer Fun #331**

☐ **Katy Keene #5**

☐ **Archie Comics Digest #67**

☐ **Betty & Veronica Comics Digest #9**

☐ **Archie A. Where Are You Digest #31**

CAPITAL
Publications Inc

☐ **Whisper #4**—Whisper is blackmailed into killing the head of Japan's criminal underground. There she learns the truth about ninjas. Steven Grant, Rich Larson and Les Dorsceid.

☐ **Badger #6**—Ham, the Weather Wizard, seeks revenge on Kepco Corp. He uses a 300' tidal wave. So what if California happens to be in the way. Badger goes into his troubled past. Mike Baron, Bill Reinhold, Jeff Dee, Jeff Butler and Les Dorscheid.

☐ **Nexus #8**—Sundra Peale faces a zombie-like Yalta on one hand and a Cohesive Web spy on the other. On Nexus Judah Maccabee and The Badger enter the Ring of Philosophy where the mind can kill as easily as a lithium beam. Mike Baron, Steve Rude and Les Dorscheid.

CHARLTON COMICS

☐ **Funny Animals #1**

☐ **Ghost Manor #76**

☐ **Haunted #75**

☐ **Fightin' Marines**

☐ **Attack #48**

☐ **Scary Tales #46**

COMICO

☐ **Mage #3**

DARGAUD INTERNATIONAL

☐ **Asterix and the Black Gold**—A. Goscinny and A. Uderzo

☐ **Kelly Green #4**—The Blood Tapes. Leonard Starr and Stan Drake

☐ **Leonardo**—...Is Still A Genius. De Groot and Turk

☐ **Leonardo**—Who Is This Guy, Anyway? DeGroot and Turk

☐ **Lt. Blueberry**—Art by Jean Giraud ("Moebius") and stories by J.M. Charlier.

EAGLE COMICS

☐ **Judge Dredd in "The Judge Child Quest" #1**—Dredd sets out to find the Judge Child fated to rule Mega-City One in an effort to divert the prophesized end of their civilization. John Wagner, Brian Bolland, Mike McMahon Ron Smith and Tom Frame.

☐ **Nemesis The Warlock #1**—Termight, a world torn by racial hatred. The human Torquemada rules with a ruthless hand. His Nemesis, the Warlock, an alien, is no better. Pat Mills, Kevin O'Neill and Steve Potter.

ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **Zot #3**—Zot finds the thief of Key to the Door at the Edge of the Universe is close to home. Scott McCloud

☐ **Ms. Tree #8**—Max Collins and Terry Beatty.

☐ **Sabre #10**—Sabre and Melissa try to return to normalcy with their two new children. Don McGregor and Jose Ortiz.

☐ **DNAgents #12**—The mysterious Black Box is about to explode and take California with it. Evanier, Meugniot and Gordon.

☐ **Eclipse Monthly #8**—The Masked Man meets "Phantom Man" by B. C. Boyer and the final chapter of "Carlos McLlyr" by Christy Marx and Peter Ledger.

☐ **Star Reach Classics #3**—P. Craig Russell, Steve Lelaloha, Alex Nino and Gene Day.

☐ **Crossfire #2**—Showdown with Scavanger. Evanier and Spiegle.

☐ **Destroyer Duck #7**—Duke, Beryl and Pancho face zombies. Dixon, Kato and Alcala.

☐ **Surge #1**—Surge tracks Luger's killer to South Africa. Evanier, Hoberg and Gordon.

☐ **Aztec Ace #3**—Ace travels to ancient Egypt to uncover a Ebonati plot. Moench, Dan Day and Redondo.

FIRST COMICS

☐ **American Flagg #12**—Flagg and the Videorangers go up against A.S.L.C. in the Plex Mall. Howard Chaykin.

☐ **Grimjack #2**—John Gaunt re-

turns to the Arena. And a humanoid slug gets a drink at Grimjack. Timothy Truman, John Ostrander and Rick Veitch.

☐ **E-Man #18**—E-Man goes into Chicago's past and becomes involved in riots. Joe Staton, Rick Burchett.

☐ **Starslayer #20**—Torin is reunited with his son Brann. The multiparter "Who Is the Black Flame?" begins. Timothy Truman, John Ostrander, Timothy Truman, Hilary Barta, Peter B. Gillis, Tom Sutton and Bruce Patterson.

☐ **Jon Sable #16**—Jon Sable comes up against Lady Margaret Graemalcyn "The Cat". Mike Grell.

☐ **Mars #9**—The Expeditionary Crew go against Milos and Morgana is betrayed by her closest friend. Marc Hempel and Mark Wheatley.

☐ **Warp #16**—Chaos loses his head and the Outrider discovers the true secret of Iron Star. Bill Willingham, Mike Gustovich and Peter B. Gillis.

Graphik
Heroes for the New Age!

☐ **Graphik Illusions #1**—Arcane battles and space detectives. Cliff Van Meter, Turner, Tanguay, Johann Wulfstar, D.B. Webb and Ted Boonthanakit.

☐ **Siegel and Shuster Dateline: 1930s**—The creators of Superman bring a space opera "The Interplanetary Police" and a scientific adventurer "Steve Walsh" to life. Also a comic potpourri called "Popular Comics".

☐ **Silverheels #4**—Flan goes to an award ceremony. April Campbell, Scott Hampton, Bruce Jones, Ken Steacy and Jaime Hernandez.

☐ **Sun-Runners #4**—A decript alien Key-Wey, may hold the key to Doc Gibralter's past. Mark Dancer and Scooter search for Doc as only he can save Delphi. Roger McKenzie and Patrick Broderick.

☐ **Vanguard Illustrated #7**—An unusual werewolf story, a woman of the future trapped in the past and the "anything goes" hero, Mr. Monster. Kaluta cover.

☐ **Alien World #8**—A street musician, the rare human in a city filled with aliens. John Bolton cover.

☐ **Jerry Iger's Famous Features #1**—Matt Baker issue featuring unpublished Matt Baker art.

☐ **Bernie Wrightson Master Of The Macabre #4**—Wrightson chillers including "The Task".

☐ **Vortex #10**—Bill Sienkiewicz cover.

☐ **Elfquest #19**

(clockwise) Silverbeard, Tarzan's "Father"; Kala, Tarzan's "Mother"; Kala and her son Tarzan (Daniel Polly). (Photo by Ernst Haas); Tarzan becomes the Alpha Male. (Photo by Ernst Haas); White Eyes, the evil ape. Eric Langlois plays the teenaged Tarzan. © Warner Bros.

(Clockwise) Christopher Lambert as Tarzan (Photo by Ernst Haas) Ralph Richardson as Tarzan's grandfather (Photo by Snowdon) Ian Holm as Phillippe d'Arnot, Tarzan's teacher. Andie MacDowell as Jane and Christopher Lambert as Tarzan (Photo by Snowdon). Jane cannot resist Tarzan's animal magnetism. © Warner Bros.

tween life and death everyday. In *Greystoke* Tarzan leaves the jungle to experience life in society. There he must deal with curious doctors, envious rivals and his first encounter with love and despair.

Tarzan's parents are also portrayed in this movie. Shipwrecked they struggle to survive, ultimately failing. Under the training of Dr. Roger Fouts, one of the world's leading authorities on apes and chimpanzees, Tarzan's ape family comes alive. Fouts and Rick Baker (make-up and costumes) worked to make the humans and apes indistinguishable.

Edgar Rice Burroughs foundation has approved this script, the first time in the history of Tarzan films. Perhaps we shall find *Greystoke* equals the spirit of Burroughs and the fine comic artists who have remained true to the original concept.

Animated Antics

By James Van Hise

Doug Wildey And The Creation of JONNY QUEST

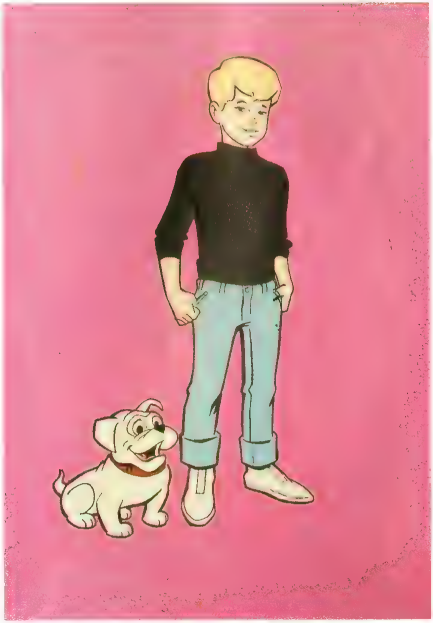
CF: How did you start doing the animation work which led to Jonny Quest?

WILDEY: At the time I was a member of the National Cartoonists Society and they had a newsletter where they would list various things and they had a section where they would list jobs which were available. I saw an ad there for an animation artist. The job was in Los Angeles and I lived in Tucson and so I gave them a call. It happened to be Alex Toth who was running a project called *Space Angel*. They hired me on a one week's trial basis and that job lasted about ten or eleven weeks.

Someone then told me to go over to Hanna-Barbera and take some samples because Hanna-Barbera was thinking of doing a show called *Jack Armstrong*. So I went over and talked to Bill Hanna and he had me bring in some samples for *Jack Armstrong*, and I wrote it, storyboarded it and designed some characters and Joe Barbera saw it and hired me.

They put me down as a director and I worked on the project for awhile, writing the story and the small premise for the actors to come in and record. We wanted to audition a bunch of actors to see who would be the closest thing to Jack Armstrong. The original actor's name was Jim Ameche who played it on the radio years before. So I listened to a number of tapes and they asked me who I thought would be the closest one and they didn't tell me who the people were. Jack Armstrong was supposed to be about eighteen years old as a character and the one I liked best and picked was Howie Morris, who sounded like an eighteen year old kid.

But as it worked out, the people who owned the rights to *Jack Armstrong* apparently wanted a lot of money to let Hanna-Barbera produce the show and so instead Joe Barbera just asked me



Jonny Quest and his dog, Bandit. ©Hanna Barbera

Jonny Quest, Dog Bandit, Friend Hadji and monster Race Bannon © Hanna-Barbera

to create a new character for them. I came up with *Jonny Quest*, but at first it was called *The Saga Of Chip Ballioo*. The characters were all the same and had the same relationship, but that was my first title.

I picked the name Quest out of the L.A. phone book. I was just looking through names and Quest sounded good because it seemed to imply adventure and whatever. For the first name we wanted Jonny without the "h", or Jonathan, in other words. Meanwhile I had written the entire premise as to who does what to whom. Then I wrote six or eight premises of stories. I tried to put into this show the things that I had liked when I was a kid so that when a kid is looking at the show, the kid will have an affinity for it. For instance, I know that somewhere in your lifetime, whether you were nine years old or whatever, there was somebody up the block or somewhere that you were scared stiff of, either a bully or someone that you were scared was going to deck you or give you a bad time, and a kid would wish for someone he could have around like a protector or bodyguard. That was where Race Bannon came in.

I brought Hadji in because I wanted to use a different type of a minority whereby we could also work the background interests of his character into the story. I thought that might be appealing.

The first one I wrote was the one about the Sargasso Sea and I did two and one-half minutes of artwork myself —all still stuff, no animation. I did the background, the figures and all of the timing of the dramatics including the music cues for that 2½ minute segment as a pilot to sell the series.

CF: Where did the scenes come from in the closing credits which never appeared in any of the episodes?

WILDEY: That was from the *Jack Armstrong* show. In other words, when I approached *Jonny Quest*, the only thing that I would do was make sure that it had a scientific plausibility someplace. I was constantly reading *Scientific American* and that sort of publication because, believe-it-or-not, I tried to pitch the show for ten years hence. I talked to Barbera about it and he said, "Yes, we've got to shoot it for ten years ahead because there's a possibility the show might last ten years in one form of rerun or another."

I didn't want it to appear dated and so I was always trying to get ahead, such as with the hovercraft and the laser. I had one episode with what I called the snow-skimmer and which pre-dated the snowmobile. Nobody'd even heard of it then. I got the idea from the boats they use in swamps which have the big propellor on the back and which jump around the swamps in Florida and Louisiana. That was the snow-skimmer principle as I had a propellor on the back. I didn't think along terms of the snowmobile, which in hindsight is very simple.

In the case of something like a hydrofoil, *National Geograpic* or other magazines would have eight or ten pages on them. They had hydrofoils going across the Straits of Messina in Italy about a year after World War Two ended, in constant service. It's always seemed remarkable to me that this country never had one. The United States never even tackled something like that. I figured that the hydrofoil would be something which is coming and would be a method of transportation in the future, and so that was included in the show too.

The laser beam had just been mentioned at that time and so I did a little research on lasers and really did a pretty oversimplified story whereby I had read an article where some military people had devised an antidote for the laser weapons which were nothing more than mirrored suits. They would dress the troops in mirrors so that the beam would bounce off and deflect. It seemed pretty simple to me at the time, but I don't know how sturdy a scientific background it had. So I just used the mirror idea at the end of the Sargasso Sea episode by having the bad guy's laser gun be deflected and blow them all up. At that time on television you could do that sort of thing.

I didn't write all of the episodes. I controlled about eighteen or nineteen of them and designed the characters in ninety or ninety-five percent of the shows. Once the thing starts going through the mill in a huge studio, obviously you can't hold it all together. But most of the stuff, story-wise, the science-fact type of approach was included in most of the episodes that I managed to control.

For the Sargasso Sea episode we did a little research on exactly what it is and what it's composed of and through dialogue, Jonny and Race would talk about what the Sea actually was and why all these ships were trapped in it and so forth. It was just a little bit of an educational touch without putting the curse on it. I didn't want to make it an "educational show", but I still wanted to have a little bit of fact there somewhere if I could manage it.

CF: You mentioned that the end titles were scenes from the unproduced Jack Armstrong *show. Did you design the title sequences of the show yourself?*

WILDEY: No that was not my choice of opening titles. I hated them. Those were simply from one of the episodes when they were in an airplane and that was just an excerpt. I had been working on the titles whereby it would have been close to what I did on a later show called *Return to the Planet of the Apes* where I designed the titles to fit the beat of the music. As the music would hit the picture would change and, in most cases, it was just stills. On *Jonny Quest*, for instance, I wanted to have a freeze frame at the end of sixteen beats of music so that there would be a little bit of animation within the action. I would have a panther in a tree and then cut to the jeep as they were coming

Doug Wildey, creator of Jonny Quest.

under the limb of the tree and the panther would spring and then I would freeze frame it. It would have been that type of an approach to cover the minute of titles.

But the thing got away from us. All of a sudden I was thrust into the publicity push for the show. This was the first animated adventure show on network prime time and there was a lot of interest in it generated by the studio publicity. So I would be interviewed by various people who wanted to know what is upcoming in television and so the publicity guy would get me in there and we'd tell them a whole bunch of lies as to what it is we were doing. They always overdo these things with hype and I got involved in that when I would have much preferred to work on the production, especially those titles.

I never liked those titles. It was very poor animation for that one sequence and I would have liked a little stronger titles. But the end titles were the ones we had done for *Jack Armstrong* which we had put into production to make a little presentation film. I utilized my version of the hovercraft, which was a very small one which was off the ground riding on air, which now, of course, is pretty much established in various places in the world. I combined that with the old Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan type of stuff with the natives chasing them and throwing spears and everyone's running for their lives as the spears are whizzing by. That I had also written for *Jack Armstrong*. We'd wanted to update *Jack Armstrong* to a degree and so we had some of the hovercrafts. I also had come up with a transfer system from air to sea via a pneumatic tube, which I'd also read about as something coming and it seemed like a good way to get something from the top to the bottom and then reverse. We took the best of all of them to use as the closing titles on *Jonny Quest*. It was never incorporated into any *Jonny Quest* stuff and just happened to be there and so we used it.

CF: Had you planned to incorporate it in the future?

WILDEY: No. These things come rapidly and they go rapidly. In other words, there are thousands of ideas on television and I have artwork all over every studio in Hollywood of various ideas that people had that they wanted to sell to television and they would employ me to put it into a graphic presentation. There's literally hundreds of them, stacked in warehouses or whatever. Maybe they've been destroyed. I don't know.

They come in fast, everybody gets excited about them, then I get on it and I hand it back and then all of a sudden the whole thing just drops dead! A guy like myself is in a peculiar position because I am an artist, basically, and I illustrate somebody's ideas. If the idea is no good, I can give it a good shot, but that's not going to make a bad idea all that much better and, unfortunately, a lot of the ideas that come through are not what you'd call great. And today I don't think you'd even have much of a shot on *Jonny Quest*. I happened to be there at the right time, I guess, and maybe television was ready for it.

Considering the "cult" following that *Jonny Quest* has, I recently suggested to Joe Barbera a new show called *Young Dr. Quest*, Jonny Quest grows up, Hadji grows up, Race gets older, etc., but basically we continue about young Dr. Quest who's twenty-two years old and who has graduated from M.I.T. or whatever and we'd carry on from there.

CF: What was the response?

WILDEY: I got no reception to that idea. There's a joint ownership on that particular production by Screen Gems and Hanna-Barbera. I guess that it's the only show that Hanna-Barbera does not own outright. I'm not very clear on how the financing of the *Jonny Quest* show was set up. I've heard several versions, but I don't know which one is true. But anyway, I know that Screen Gems has participated in every rerun of *Jonny Quest*.

It's also been suggested as *Jonny Quest: The Movie*, in live action.

CF: Who suggested that?

WILDEY: Well, I did, but not first hand. I got the idea from a writer who's in-

terested in it and watched it when he was a kid and just kept watching it like George Lucas did, and possibly Spielberg—I'm not sure of him.

I saw a very fine movie called *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and wondered why I liked it so much and suddenly realized that I was looking at some of the stuff that I had written on *Jonny Quest*. Then I heard that George Lucas was a *Jonny Quest* fan who had watched it countless times, which I take as a compliment as well people should whose work I have adapted over the years from western movies and whatever. It's something that your brain doesn't shut off. You just remember something that you liked and you kind of do it in your style. You include that type of situation, let's say.

CF: One thing which I always found interesting about Jonny Quest *was that it was actually dramatic; there was a genuine sense of jeopardy whereas on other cartoon shows you never really felt that anything was going to happen. On* Jonny Quest *there was the drama and the villains had more depth to their attitudes.*

WILDEY: That's a basic rule of writing, at least in my version of it, that if you do not have some kind of guts in the writing, it simply isn't going to work, I've been through this countless times with various producers and studio heads and whatever who really are not that interested.

The writers on today's scene in Saturday Morning are just incredibly bad, at least most of them. They have never taken the pains to learn what business they're in. They write novels, short stories, essays, letters home, everything except what they're supposed to write, which is Saturday Morning television.

On *Jonny Quest* we had good writers; I worked with most of them personally. When I would write, I'd write an outline from one page to eight pages to explain the story—where does it happen, what would be the hook in the story

Jonny Quest, Bandit, Hadji and Race Bannon. ©Hanna Barbera

scientifically and then who are these villains and why are they doing this? This seems to be the one thing that escapes today's television people. Even the network people, whose product we manufacture as producers, are really interested in the action and the colors, perhaps, and the costumes and the characters, but the story depth escapes them. They really are not all that interested in it which bothers me because if a guy had come in to Hanna-Barbera and said, "Here's the story for *Jonny Quest*," he would be approaching it like this is another cartoon show and he will simply write the script and get paid for it and run. That's today's standard, but it was not the standard at that time. If he had come in with things like, "The Quest group is walking through the jungle and a talking bird comes down", I would have refused that. I don't want a talking bird. It's unrealistic to the point where the audience, the kid that's watching the show, is gonna' say, "I can't buy that."

Basically it's that simple. I don't see any mystery there. You can go to great lengths. You can have fantasy, you can have whatever, but there is a line beyond which you cannot go. You just do not have a talking bird come down and, in sentences, describe to the people where the gold mine is, or whatever. It just doesn't work.

Another guy came in with Jonny Quest jet-powered swim fins, and it seemed too far out for me. Admittedly I wrote one story with a guy strapping on a rocket pack and flying. Now I could buy that, but I couldn't buy jet powered swim fins. It looked like a cheap, phony cartoon type of approach and therefore I would say no.

At the time, everybody was submitting stories, but the direction was wrong. They were trying to make a Popeye cartoon out of something that was supposed to be a broader version of an adventure/live-action comic strip type of show.

Continued Next Issue

 Continued from page 11

© 1968 Marvel Comics Group

already done half the work for them, which is a very unusual arrangement. The closest Marvel ever came to publicly acknowledging this special style of collaboration was when they'd credit the story and art as being "By Stan Lee and Jack Kirby" without specifying who did what, although the unspoken assumption would be that Lee wrote it and Kirby drew it. In retrospect it did look a little peculiar in light of the fact that the other people (the inker, letterer) received very specific credits rather than the amorpheus, all-encompassing ones given Lee and Kirby. It should be noted that when Kirby did return to Marvel in the mid to late Seventies, he did not return to the strips he'd worked on with Lee, such as Thor and the Fantastic Four, but did original features as well as books he could become more closely associated with such as Black Panther, Machine Man and the Eternals or with something he'd *always* been associated with, such as Captain America.

The origin of Thor was a simple 13 page story drawn by Jack Kirby and Joe Sinnott which showed lame Doctor Don Blake finding the enchanted cane, discovering its power which transformed him into Thor and driving off the powerful menace of the Stone Men from Saturn. His speech pattern was pretty normal, the only hint of the archaic pattern it would adopt later was the quote from Shakespeare, "Iron bars do not a prison make."

In *J.I.M.* #84, Thor journeyed to the troubled republic of San Diablo in the guise of Don Blake where he battled the Communist menace of The Executioner. The story is a fast paced tableau which epitomizes the early Marvel super-hero adventures as Thor battles enemy forces in the Kirby style that rewrote comics in Marvel's image, from Thor chopping aircraft in half with his hammer to causing a tank to vibrate to pieces harmlessly around its crew. There was also the, "I mustn't let them learn my secret" tension so common in the early stories of the Marvel heroes. This is less prevalent today in most books and is nonexistent in *Thor*, and has been for years.

"Trapped By Loki, The God Of Mischief!" in *J.I.M.* #85 introduced the puzzling concept of the Asgardian gods treating this Thor as the real one even though he was just Don Blake in possession of Thor's identity, a concept which would not be fully worked out and resolved for several years. Here Loki escapes from Asgard and confronts Thor on Earth where he must use his knowledge of Norse mythology to understand who and what Loki is. When Thor returns Loki to Asgard via his hammer, Odin and the others react very matter-of-factly about the whole thing. But why?

In story after story it becomes clear that this really is Thor, and yet it's also Don Blake. Blake/Thor loves his nurse, Jane Foster, but Odin refuses Thor's request to marry a mortal or have Odin make her an immortal. If Blake were merely the image of Thor he could do as he pleased, so again this nagging question remains, causing a schizophrenia in the storyline because didn't Blake just find the cane by accident and gain the *power* of Thor? This basic question remains a riddle until Thor himself demands the truth in #159, "Who is Don Blake?", in the December 1968 issue, some six years after Thor was introduced. But more of that later.

While Kirby remained *the* artist of Thor until the early Seventies, his involvement with the book during the first eighteen months was only tentative. He drew it through #89 and then did only numbers 94 and 97 before resuming as the regular artist with #101, although he still drew all of the covers on the issues when he was ab-

sent from the Thor strip, thus helping the title retain an identifiable thread of continuity. The fill-in artists were Al Hartley (#90), Joe Sinnott (numbers 91, 92, 94-96, where he drew Thor's hammer with a handle which looked to be about three feet long) and Don Heck (numbers 98-100). About this time Marvel made an announcement in some of their titles that Thor had been neglected by them for awhile but that they were striving to turn that around, and Kirby's return to the title proved that to be no idle boast.

Time travel has always been one of my favorite plot devices and so it's little wonder that I have special admiration for issues #86 and #101-102 which featured Zarrko, the Tomorrow Man. These stories read much more like D.C. plots of the early Sixties what with Thor following the villain into the future after he's stolen something from our time. These stories, as well as all of the early Thor adventures, depend much more on Thor using his wits and wiles than solving things with a shattering blow of his hammer. The fight scenes are balanced with well thought out stories where interesting little things happen which are much more pleasureable than watching Thor and some menace rearrange the landscape of Manhattan Island one more time. In #86, when a robot grabs Thor's hammer, leaving him only sixty seconds of power before he reverts to his Don Blake identity, instead of tearing up the robot he tears up the floor, finds a water pipe and uses the fluid to disable *all* of the giant robots to regain his hammer. In #102, when forced to do Zarrko's bidding in order to save the Earth of our time, Thor outsmarts Zarrko by disabling Zarrko's foes through clever, non-violent means instead of engaging in armed combat with them.

Unfortunately, #101 also introduced what would become a tiresome cliche —Odin gets mad at Thor and reduces his power by half. This was used as

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constantly in Thor as the devices of the Fantastic Four losing their power and Spider-Man hanging up his uniform were used in those other titles. They are all cliches which become tiresome quickly.

In order to introduce the readers to the Norse mythology behind the comic, #97 began the long running series "Tales Of Asgard", which proved to be a harbinger of what the comic would become several years later.

Instead of just having Loki return time after time, new Asgardian menaces appeared such as the Enchantress, the Executioner and Surtur, the fire demon. The title was changing its focus from strictly Earthbound stories to tales wherein Asgard formed a stronger and stronger part of the adventures. When the stories were divided half and half between Earthly menaces and cosmic Asgardian ones, the mix and contrast worked well. After the book began dwelling on Asgardian tales to the virtual exclusion of Earthly ones, a dull sameness overtook the title. It seemed that the latest issue had to strive to be even more cosmic than the last until it all seemed terribly distant and far removed. It was the contrast of Thor the god of thunder facing Earthly menaces which went a long way towards making the stories interesting and making *Thor* one of my favorite Sixties comic books.

Thor numbers 105 and 106 are two of the best early stories, featuring the team-up of The Cobra and Mr. Hyde (two interesting and off-beat villains). The Cobra is an ex-con who gained his powers after being bitten by a radioactive cobra (ho-hum) while Hyde perfected a drug which can give him enormous strength and then change him back when he takes an antidote pill. Being so different they make an interesting team. Issue #105 has a great scene where they capture Don Blake while looking for Thor and Blake explains that if they strike his cane on the floor that it will summon Thor. In this case it's shown that even if *someone else* holds the cane and strikes it, Blake will still be transformed into Thor. Issue #106 has some excellent action sequences, showing how this kind of thing can be done without resorting to the demolition derby cliche of mindless fisticuffs. When Hyde surprises Thor and knocks the hammer from his hand, Thor vows, "Let it lay!! If I cannot defeat this evil being bare-handed within one minute, I am not worthy of the name *Thor*!!" Thus an element of tension and suspense is added to the destructive fight sequence, adding an emotional undertone in the process. It's recurring little ideas like this which make these early tales stand out.

Other interesting issues here are #107, which introduced the Grey Gargoyle, #109 in which he faces Magneto, #110 and #111 with the Cobra and Hyde again, and especially #112 in which Thor battles the Hulk in an untold segment from the story which took place in *Avengers* #3 when the team battled The Hulk and Namor. Issue #114 introduced the Absorbing Man, another powerful Earthbound foe (although secretly abetted by Loki) who made for some great early stories.

With issue #116, Vince Colletta took over the inking from Chic Stone, who'd

been inking the book since #102. While Colletta only inked a handful of the F.F.'s which Kirby drew, he inked most of the rest of Kirby's run on *Thor*. But while Colletta's inking on *The Fantastic Four* seemed cold, his inking on Thor shaped up quickly as though he enjoyed this book much more than others he'd done. The recent revelation that Colletta enjoys fantasy much more than standard super-hero fare tends to bear this out as Thor was entering its more cosmic period here.

Issue #118 introduced The Destroyer, a device of Asgardian origin which was nonetheless stored on Earth. Since it's an Earthbound story it seems more science fiction than the Asgardian fantasies usually do.

Thor Annual numbers 1 and 2 appeared when Kirby and Colletta were doing the book and the first annual introduced Hercules. While at first he seemed little different than Thor, later appearances shaped his character in more interesting directions. The second annual reintroduced The Destroyer, this time animated by Loki.

Thor #126 featured a fine rematch between the Asgardian and Hercules in which Odin's robbing Thor of half of his power cliche is used well for the final time. Thereafter it was tiresome.

The 1966 issues of *Thor* featured a marvelous creative outburst and stories which would be long remembered. In #130, Thor journeyed to the netherworld to rescue Hercules from Pluto. Issues 131-133 featured the Colonizer outer space trilogy which climaxed with the introduction of the living planet, Ego. It was in issues 134 and 135 that the High Evolutionary and his beastman of Wundagore were introduced.

It was issue #136 which disposed of the Jane Foster subplot, seemingly once and for all (until it was only recently revived), and introduced the goddess Sif as Thor's love interest. Now the series was leaving the Earthbound stories behind virtually once and for all.

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Only occasional interesting departures such as "The Growing Man" in #140, "The Wrath of Replicus" in #141 and "The Sourge of the Super-Skrull!!" in #142 served as a respite and recalled the fine earlier issues before the book went off the deep end into fantasy. Even when he did face Earthly menaces thereafter, he tended to have Asgardians at his side, smothering Thor's uniqueness.

Thor #159 finally unravels the Don Blake/Thor dilemma by revealing that Thor was sent to Earth in the guise of Blake years ago in order to learn humility. They were one and the same all along and when Blake found the walking stick it was because Odin had decreed that it was time for Thor to regain his immortal guise. Issue #158 led up to this revelation with a framing device that reprinted the origin from #83. Marvel retells their origins about every three years because they feel that a turnover to many new readers has taken place within that time.

In these later issues of Kirby's stint, *Thor* was at its best in the science fiction stories which took place out in space and far from Asgard. Numbers 160-162 had Galactus menacing the planet Ego and Thor was apprised of the menace by the Recorder, the robot introduced in the sf trilogy in issues 131-133. Thor confronted Galactus again in issues 168 and 169 to learn the

being's origin.

Numbers 165 and 166 featured the character called "Him" who was introduced in *Fantastic Four* #67 and who would later become known as Adam Warlock when transformed by Roy Thomas and Gil Kane. A few of these later issues had particularly fine inking by the late Bill Everett and even a couple by George Klein.

Kirby's last issue was #177, the June 1970 issue, which marked his departure for D.C. comics. Subsequent artists, whether they be Neal Adams (on numbers 180 and 181) or John Buscema, attempted to draw the book with a Kirby look, but the focus of the character had become so dispersed that it no longer mattered.

Roy Thomas tried to bring the book more into line with traditional Norse mythology during his stint, as opposed to the pop mythology which Marvel had been using over the years. This is when Odin lost an eye and Balder died (as mythology chronicled) only to be resurrected later. One of the most oddball issues during this time was #280 in which Wayne Boring (who drew many classic Superman stories in the Fifties and Sixties) was the guest artist for one issue. The experiment would have been more successful had he, instead of Tom Palmer, inked his own work just as he had in the Sixties at D.C.

Thor proved himself to be mighty indeed by hanging on no matter what was done to him, no matter how good, bad or indifferent the character was handled. But at last the series is turning around into the type of book it was back in the Sixties under Jack Kirby.

Thor #337 swept fandom by storm recently when Walt Simonson took over as the writer/artist/inker of the title and revitalized a book which looked as though it couldn't have been given a new life even if you'd shot three million volts through it. But Simonson showed what was possible in just three issues the same way that Frank Miller

THE CAVE IS BATHED IN BLINDING LIGHT! LIKE A FIERY BOLT OF LIGHTNING! AND THE ANCIENT CAVE—IS—IT'S CHANGING SHAPE!
AND—I'M CHANGING TOO!!
CAN THIS BE REALLY HAPPENING —OR AM I GOING MAD!!!
THIS CANE! IT HAS BECOME A MIGHTY HAMMER! AND I HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO—INTO—WHAT? THESE ARE POWERS SUCH AS I'VE NEVER KNOWN!!
NO! I'M NOT MAD! I CAN FEEL MY BODY BURSTING WITH POWER—POWER SUCH AS I'VE NEVER KNOWN!!
WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER, IF HE BE WORTHY, SHALL BE POSSESSED OF THE POWERS OF—THOR
THOR!! THE LEGENDARY GOD OF THUNDER!! THE MIGHTIEST WARRIOR OF ALL MYTHOLOGY!! THIS IS MINE HAMMER!! AND I— I AM THOR!!!
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pumped Daredevil from a third string character into a first rate book. The same creativity that Simonson brought to the minor character The Manhunter in *Detective Comics* numbers 337-443 in '73-'74, he's infused into Thor. This is especially surprising since Simonson pencilled *Thor* numbers 261-269 a few years before, but since he neither wrote nor inked those issues, his truly distinctive approach remained out of sight. I'd been wondering when Simonson was going to break out with something as interesting as The Manhunter again, and he's really done it here.

In *Marvel Age* #6, shortly before *Thor* #337 appeared, Simonson outlined some of his plans for the book which will take him up at least through issue #350 and possibly beyond. "I have some major changes in mind. There are two major directions: One feeling I have about *Thor* is that the book has gotten extremely top-heavy. For example, you have a zillion pantheons of deities all floating around. When Hercules showed up the first time it was great—but now, you've got Egyptian gods, Incan gods, Hindu gods. After a while, in that company, Thor is just one more super-powered guy. It may be that he's the best of all those guys—but Thor sort of gets lost in the shuffle. I plan to do some major surgery in the vast supporting cast that has grown around the lead character in the last twenty years.

"I'd like to create a sort of underlying unity among the characters, both on Earth and in Asgard. I'm a long-time fan of Thor. Basically, I would like to make Thor an interesting book to read, and to do that I'd like to make the book an interesting book to create. I expect I will be doing a sort of classic Thor. I don't expect to change the character of Thor...but I'd like to enlarge on Thor's character and those of the characters around him.

"An example: Odin's very existence causes a lot of problems. He's so powerful that when Thor can't handle a really big danger Odin gets dragged in to take care of it. Or else you get Odin against Thor. Odin says 'Son, you've been proud for the 334th time—once too often—and I'm gonn' nail you to the wall!' This always struck me as funny—of all the characters in that book who needed lessons in humility, Thor is maybe number *two* in line. So, I'd like to make Odin brighter and put him more in the background."

Without a doubt Simonson has returned the kind of enervating kinetic storytelling to the book which it hasn't seen since the early Sixties. There is a tense sense of immediacy in the Simonson Thor, as well as a seemingly lost sense of wonder for the character and the possibilities inherent in the strip. It's almost as though the book has the freshness one finds in a great comic which is just starting out new. It's these sensations of something being reborn with explosive enthusiasm that Fandom has picked up on in embracing a character and a comic which had been stale for more than a decade.

A few years ago, when Mike Zeck told me that he was planning to leave *Master of Kung Fu* to do something different, I said that he ought to think about doing Thor because it needed an infusion of new blood and fresh ideas. The book just seemed to be lying there, existing from month to month without a drive or sense of purpose. If any book had room for the most improvement it was *Thor* and Walt Simonson is proving that now on a monthly basis by showing just how good a comic can be when someone grasps it by the creative horns and twirls it from top to bottom.

Continued from page 13

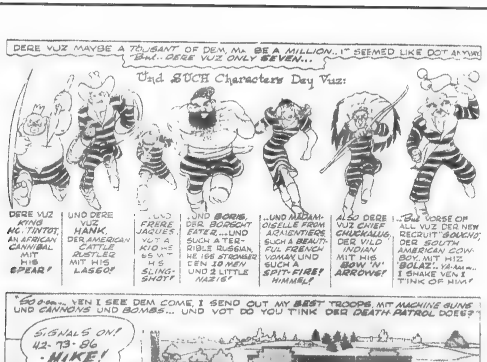
The SNIPER
I AM THE SNIPER HUNT THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME!
MEN... IN THE SHAPE OF FIENDS!
LISTEN WELL... FOR... A TALE OF... HERE IS THE STRANGE HUNT!
TOWARD A NAZI-HELD VILLAGE SHUFFLED A GROUP OF MEN... RETURNED FROM BESTIAL RELIGIONS...
...Suddenly... THEIR BLANK STARES CHANGED... THEY CHARGED UPON HATING RELATIVES!...
"...SON MURDERED FATHER... AND THE STORY AROUSED EVEN THIS CENSORED NATION..."
"BUT I KNOW WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHANGING GOOD MEN TO BEASTS... IT IS HANS KROMITZ... CHIEF REICH CHEMIST WHO SHOOTS INSANITY'S GERM INTO SANE MEN'S VEINS!"
...REMAGE KROMITZ I AM AFTER YOU... THE FIEND OF THE WILHELMSTRASSE!!

In the fifth issue (December, 1941) a new character was added. He wore a forest green costume that made him look like a latter day Robin Hood, but instead of bow and arrow he carried a high-powered hunting rifle with a telescopic sight. Known as the Sniper, he stalked human prey. "All the great capitols are this man's hunting ground as he continues his one-man warfare against the villains of the world". In his initial adventure the Sniper fights against the Nazis in an occupied Austrian town. Unlike more conventional snipers, he also goes in for direct hand to hand combat. The first story ends with the Sniper's blowing up the car of his chief opponents with the result that "the Nazis meet the fate they'd intended for the Sniper! Death embraces them with fiery fingers!".

The Sniper was the work of writer Ted Udall and artist Frank Harry Lanning, the same team who'd invent *The Ghost Patrol* for *Flash Comics* a few months later. The Sniper fired his last shot in #34 (November, 1944) and among the other artists who drew his Axis-hunting escapades were Bernie Klein and Vernon Henkel.

In the midst of all these militants you also found, for some reason, a super heroine. Her name was Miss America and she acquired her abilities while visiting the Statue of Liberty. "Gosh! Just think of all the GOOD a person could do if they had the POWERS that the Statue of Liberty must possess!!" muses pretty reporter Joan Dale (I suppose it would be ungallant of me to point out her grammatical error in the preceding sentence. Let her editor worry about it.). As Joan dozes the Statue of Liberty addresses her, "I heard what you said and I'm going to give you my MAGIC POWERS so that you may give your country all the help it needs!!". These powers include the ability to turn hoodlums into doves and the ability to teleport herself just about anywhere. Miss America is so busy trying out her new powers she doesn't even get around to putting on a costume in her maiden venture. In fact, it's not until issue #4 that she shows up in a snappy, but skimpy, red, white and blue number.

My sense of humor has, I think, grown somewhat more sophisticated over the ensuing years. Back then, though, I was tickled monthly by *Military*'s earliest out-and-out humor feature. A work of youthful Al Jaffee, it dealt with a soldier named Courtney Fudd who was stationed at Fort Bang and had an alter ego. "Through the ages CRIME and EVIL have flourished unhampered," Jaffee explained by way of introduction, "...Then, several years ago the era of the SUPER-POWERFUL MAN came into being. But still CRIME was RAMPANT...SUDDENLY into the cringing minds of CROOKS and CRIMINALS, and into the enlightened hearts of HOPEFUL HUMANITY there became EMBLAZONED a NAME...a name which signified COURAGE, POWER, relentless HONESTY...That


DERE VUZ MAYBE A THOUSANT OF DEM, MA BE A MILLION... I' SEEMED LIKE DOT AH YUH
"BUT.. DERE VUZ ONLY SEVEN"...
Und SUCH Characters Dey Vuz:
DERE VUZ KING NG...TINTOT, AN AFRICAN CANNIBAL MIT HIS SPEAR!
UND DERE VUZ HANK, DER AMERICAN CATTLE RUSTLER MIT HIS LASSO!
UND FRERE JAQUES, VUT A RIOTOUS VIT HIS SLINGSHOT!
...UND BORIS, DER BORSCHT EATER...UND SUCH A TERRIBLE RUSSIAN, HE VUZ STRONGER DEN 10 MEN UND 2 LITTLE NAZIS!
...UND ADAM-OISELLE FROM ADVENTIERE SUCH A BEAUTIFUL FRENCH WOMAN UND SUCH A SPIT-FIRE! HIMSELF
ALSO DERE VUZ CHIEF CHUKKALUK, DER VILD INDIAN MIT HIS BOW 'N' ARROWS!
...BUT SORSE OF ALL VUZ DER NEW RECRUIT "BOLOVO", DER SOUTH AMERICAN COWBOY, MIT HIS "BOLAZ"... YA-AAA-AA... I SHAKE VEN I TINK OF HIM!
"SO SOON... VEN I SEE DEM COME, I SEND OUT MY BEST TROOPS, MIT MACHINE GUNS UND CANNONS UND BOMBS... UND VOT DO YOU TINK DER DEATH PATROL DOES?"
SIGNALS ON! 42-73-86 -MIKE!

name, which history will be proud of, is INFERIOR MAN...No man of great BRAWN is he...but his POWERFUL BRAIN can find no match." Inferior Man worked in the most sensible and functional costume of all. When it came time to fight criminals and enemy agents, he took off his clothes and worked in his underwear.

Each issue of *Military* concluded with *Secret War News*. This one claimed to be dealing in "True Stories of Daring War Adventures" and every episode opened with a mock newspaper front page complete with bold headline—"SAGA OF THE U.S.S. MARBLEHEAD", "U.S. FLIERS CRUSH JAP FLEET", etc. The artist was Alden McWilliams, an expert at drawing planes, ships and other lethal hardware. While I admired his work, this was always my least favorite feature in the magazine. In those distant days I associated the word true with dullness.

Various other strips came and went. In #14 (December, 1942) *Private Dogtag* began. Billed as "the world's dumbest soldier", the bucktoothed Dogtag was drawn by Bart Tumey and based on a strip being done by Elsner, now in the military service himself, for his camp newspaper. *PT Boat*, by Andre LeBlanc, replaced *Phantom Clipper* and a humor strip, *Sailor Danny*, had a brief run.

The War ended in the middle of 1945 and the Quality folks must've quickly decided that the public would want to forget things military. With #45 (November, 1945) the magazine becomes *Modern Comics*. Despite the new title, it was more or less business as before. Blackhawk and company, finding plenty of new villains to vanquish now that the Axis powers were washed up, remained the stars. Dogtag converted and became the world's dumbest civilian. Sexy ladies, as they were doing in a good many of the postwar comic books, began to be more prominently featured. First there was *Choo Choo* and then came Bill Ward's *Torchy*. She and Blackhawk shared the magazine until the very last issue, #102 (October, 1950). That was the end of the high-heeled blonde, but Blackhawk's career was far from over.

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recognizable name of a comic strip super-star to bring youthful audiences in to see serials whose content was, for the most part, interchangeable.

All too typical is the unfortunate fate of Milton Caniff's vivid creations: the one *Terry and the Pirates* film is a serial (1940)—and an embarrassment, not even rating the nostalgic glance the Flash Gordon serials do. Perhaps the most cinematic of all cartoonists, Caniff has never been seriously adapted to the screen. (Television had short-lived, juvenile versions of both Terry and Steve Canyon, in the '50s.)

Superman and Batman, with their birth in the comic books, had an audience that was perhaps younger than that of *Terry and the Pirates, Dick Tracy* and *Flash Gordon,* whose appeal crossed age barriers. So the serials seizing upon the super-heroes was natural, but the baggy leotards and poor production of such Columbia efforts as the Batman and Superman big-budget comics movie—*Superman*—fanned the fire, as did the Republic's *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* (1941), with Tom Tyler, the most convincing of the serial costumed heroes, an accomplishment he repeated with his visually perfect Phantom for Columbia in 1943.

Television has been somewhat kinder to the super-heroes—the *Batman* series, with the underrated Adam West and Burt Ward, kidded its subject matter in a way that allowed children to enjoy the series on one level, while adults (the children who attended those Saturday matinees of the '30s and '40s, now fully grown) could appreciate the intentional camp. Also, the Batman of TV had fun recreating the "look" of super-hero comics: garish colors, cockeyed camera angles, outlandish costumes. The first season or so of the *Wonder Woman* TV series was done somewhat in the same manner, but spoofing its source slighly less overtly. Ironically, Captain Marvel has suffered the most in the TV transition: a low-budget Saturday morning kid's show, with a badly revamped format, it died a deserved death after several lackluster seasons.

The major problem with TV series like *Batman, Wonder Woman* and the '50s *Superman* (which was also played tongue-in-cheek, in its later seasons particularly) is the stereotyping of *all* comics-related TV shows as super-hero, juvenile entertainment. Currently no primetime network TV series is derived from comics; but the most recent examples are super-hero shows like the Marvel Comics adaptations, *Spiderman* and *The Incredible Hulk.*

Television *has* had several hit series derived directly from comics (*Dennis the Menace* and *Hazel* for example) and many series have been unofficial remakes of comic characters (*The Bionic Man* being an amalgam of Superman and several Marvel heroes). Most blatant of the TV "borrowings" is *The Beverly Hillbillies*, which reworks Al Capp's Yokum family slightly, putting them in a high society setting, which was a device common to the strip. A TV pilot officially based on Li'l Abner failed to sell, largely because *The Beverly Hillbillies* and its spin-offs had glutted the market with such series (and also because the pilot was rather poorly done).

On the other hand, Abner inspired two of the most enjoyable of all strip adaptations on the screen. A little-seen and much-underrated 1940 low-budget feature was painstakingly faithful to its source, acting out several Sunday page sequences with hardly a dialogue change. Granville Owens (who later would do Caniff's Pat Ryan injustice) made a fine Abner, and Martha O'Driscoll a perfect Daisy Mae. The supporting cast included Buster Keaton as Lonesome Polecat, and the finale was, of course, Sadie Hawkins Day.

In 1959 the Broadway musical *Li'l Abner* was brought to the screen, with Abner and Daisy Mae again perfectly cast, Peter Palmer repeating his Broadway role, Leslie Parrish replacing the original cast's Edie Adams. Boasting a good Johnny Mercer/Gene DePaul score, a funny Norman Panama/ Melvin Frank script and vivid performances from all concerned, (with Stubby Kaye's Marryin' Sam a standout—Stella Stevens as Appassionatta Von-Climax stood out, too) *Li'l Abner* is one of the best big-budget comics-related films. The film lacks some of the bite of Capp's social satire (as did the earlier film, although that film pre-dates Capp's penchant for political barbs) and, like the stage play, utilizes blatantly surrealistic sets and grotesque make-up, in an effort to capture the look of the strip. Such efforts to translate to the film the look of comics—that is, the distinctive drawing style of a cartoonist like Al Capp—are risky ventures at best; by taking a literal approach to recreating Capp's expressionistic world, the film *Li'l Abner* seems somehow less "real" than the comic strip equivalent. (TV's *Batman* exploited this unreality, for laughs.)

Perhaps only in *Prince Valiant* (1955), a colorful, exciting adaptation, respectful to the spirit (if not the letter) of Hal Foster's Knights of the Round Table saga, has the look of a strip been transferred unerringly. But Henry Hathaway had Foster's illustrative style to work with, not the whimsy of a Capp or Segar.

That sort of effort may best be left to animators, such as Max Fleischer, whose *Popeye* and *Superman* cartoons often seem like Segar and Shuster sat in on the animating. In fact, Joe Shuster did provide model sheets for the excellent *Superman* cartoons, the animation of which rivals Disney and disproves the notion that human figures cannot be effectively animated. On the minus side, both *Popeye* and *Superman* were formula cartoon series, and the formula was virtually the same in both cases: Olive Oyl (Lois Lane) gets in a jam with a bullying villain Bluto (mad scientist), and Popeye eats his spinach (Clark Kent takes off his clothes) and rescues her.

In recent years, Charles Schulz's involvement in the TV and film versions of *Peanuts* has given rise to other strips being done in animation, under their creator's supervision. *Pogo, Doonesbury, B.C.* and *Family Circus* have all been adapted in this manner. It's a healthy trend.

Another trend is the renewed Hollywood interest in comics; whether it's healthy or not is a matter of opinion. The Broadway success of *Annie* and the box-office success of *Star Wars* sparked this renewed interest; the success of a big-budget comics movie—*Super-*

man—fanned the fire, as did the comics-influenced *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Comic strips continue to be optioned by moviemakers, though few of the proposed films ever get made.

When I took over the scripting of the *Dick Tracy* strip in late 1977, the film rights for Tracy had already been optioned by Paramount. And the film has yet to be made (though, at this writing, Paramount *says* production will begin soon. Action specialist Walter Hill was set to direct but since has pulled out. Warren Beatty has turned down the project once but currently is in negotiation again for the part of Dick Tracy. The Lorenzo Sample script presumably has camp elements).

While *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978) and its sequels opened the doors for more comics-related films, they have created as many problems, by continuing the trend toward camp. The Superman movies have—despite the disclaimers to the contrary from the producers, directors and casts—hewn closely to the spirit of the original TV series. The tongue-in-cheek performance of Chris Reeve in the title role is very much in the George Reeves tradition; the only major difference is that the Reeve Superman seems younger than the Reeves. Otherwise, their acting styles are much the same: both manage to wink at the camera and maintain dignity at the same time. The big-budget sets and lavish special effects of the movies would seem to separate them from the TV version—only Superman often flew more effectively in the old black-and-white TV show. Of the major recurring characters, only Lois Lane has been updated, and then only superficially; and the villains have been megalomaniacs with comical sidekicks and stereotypical dishy blonde molls. With the exception of the majestic "original tale" portion of the first film, the Superman film series has been just one step removed from the all-out camp of the *Batman* TV show.

And there's nothing wrong with that. The Superman movies are good, if not great, comic book entertainment brought to the big screen. If the sequels have disappointed (the second film seems as overrated as the third, rather charming entry, is underrated), they have not failed to entertain. To comic-book purists the major flaw has been, in the second film particularly, a lack of respect for the Superman legend; in *Superman II* (1980), our hero acts like a bully in the final diner sequence (after establishing that Clark Kent, without his super powers, really is a wimp), and in *Superman III* (1983) he lets one of the bad guys go, unpunished, just because said bad guy's being played by Richard Pryor. In all of the movies, new, never-before-mentioned super powers conveniently appear at key moments. The influence of the usually inventive (and always very British) Richard Lester on the Superman films has been largely negative—silly sight gags and a lack of respect for the American values that Superman represents undermine the latter two films.

Still, the Superman films bring the super-hero to the screen more effectively than most of us had ever thought imaginable (and the tongue-in-cheek approach only assists, here—we can only suspend disbelief for Superman's sake when he winks at us and we wink back). Comics fans who think somebody ought to do a super-hero movie "realistically" are obviously in need of counseling.

The only super-hero to lumber onto the big screen in *Superman*'s wake is *Swamp Thing* (1982), a dismal, low budget production that sported the worst rubber suit a monster has ever had to wear in a color movie. The producers of this travesty are promising a *Batman* film; they indignantly have rejected Adam West and Burt Ward for the starring roles, wanting to disassociate themselves from the "camp" of the TV *Batman*. But if *Swamp Thing* is their idea of a "straight" comic-book movie....

Flash Gordon (1980) went the camp route with a script by the ubiquitous Lorenzo Sample, and proved mindlessly enjoyable, and occasionally evoked the look of the Raymond source material. Since the storyline of *Flash Gordon* was always hokum, the self-spoofery of the movie seemed called for (though the "soundtrack" by "rock" group Queen certainly was not). But the notion that comics movies are kid stuff was reaffirmed.

Popeye (1980) alone emerged as a reminder that faithful, entertaining films can be adapted from comic strips. Director Robert Altman brought his trademark layers of oddball characterizations and overlapping dialogue to a screenplay by cartoonist Jules Feiffer that was a virtual ode to Segar. The attempt to recreate the look of

Segar's world is more successful here than in the second *Li'l Abner* (which it somewhat recalls) because director Altman stayed out of the studio, and on location. There was an off-kilter reality to the ramshackle town Altman had constructed on some Godforsaken island that the studio-bound Dogpatch never approached. Elements of the animated cartoon were brought in as well, in what will (I confidently predict) come to be considered a classic among comic-strip movies. Marred by a slow final half hour or so, and a serviceable but less-than memorable score by Harry Nilsson (the songs sound like something Jack Mercer might have adlibbed), ***Popeye*** is clearly the best of the recent crop of comics-derived films (and TV shows). Unfortunately, its unkind reception from most critics has lessened its impact as an example for other filmmakers to follow.

When *Annie* (1982) finally came along, it garnered dreadful reviews but enough box-office action to generate serious discussion of an *Annie 2*. Without the big-budget bloat of the first film, the second one conceivably could turn a profit. But the comic-strip connection, where *Annie* is concerned, has become tenuous; the Broadway play is now more famous than the strip from which it spun off. And, fittingly enough, the film version took the same sort of stupid liberties with the play, paid the same sort of disrespect to its source, that the play had to *its* source—in that play, remember, ultra-conservative Harold Gray's famous redhead found herself sitting uneasily in the lap of FDR....

Might I suggest that one of the reasons comic-strip films often fail so miserably is that moviemakers seek the famous name of a strip, for its icon value, its audience recognition, but rarely seek out the advice, the counsel, of the strip's creators? One would think I might be consulted about the forthcoming Tracy film; one would be wrong. I doubt that Chet Gould will be consulted, either. (Imagine doing a Sherlock Holmes movie, and having access to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but not bothering to call him.) But on those few occasions when cartoonists *have* been consulted—Al Capp with the two Li'l Abner movies, Charles Schulz with the Peanuts animated cartoons, for example—the films have obviously benefited. And hiring a cartoonist like Jules Feiffer to script *Popeye* is a nice way to make up for Segar not being around to consult (though picking Bud Sagendorf's brain would've been worth the trouble).

Will movie-makers continue to see comics-related films as glorified Saturday matinee fodder? Will fast-buck exploitation and contempt for the source material continue to dominate? From *Skippy* (1930) to *Prince Valiant* to *Popeye*, intelligent, respectful adaptations *have* been made. But will good comics-based films continue to be the exception, and not the rule?

Like the kids at the Saturday serials, we'll just have to wait and see what happens next.

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(of *2000 A.D.* and *Warrior*), which has only *doubled* the fun. My enthusiasm and respect for John and Alan's considerable talents is boundless, and this column will constantly reflect that as I'll be showing you *their* work as well as my own on the book.

The other aspect of working on a book such as this which will often completely overwhelm this column (though always with a clear purpose in mind) is the fact that these characters have their own histories. When working from scratch on an original character or concept one can draw purely from the unconscious. But such is *not* the case when stepping in to draw or write a comic book character who has been sustained by a number of past creators through numerous titles.

My first taste of this came just a short while ago, with a Dracula story I drew from Steve Perry's script "The Blood Bequest" for *Bizarre Adventures #33.* Because of what we were attempting to do in that story—we were completely reinterpreting Dracula's vampiric origin to our own satisfaction—the knowledge of the character's previous origin and his complete comic book lifespan became all-important. We went so far as to shoehorn our tale right *into* the already existing Dracula origin (as depicted by Marv Wolfman and Neal Adams in the black and white magazine *Dracula Lives #2*), even deliberately *repeating* key sequences and artwork. Tracking down the related stories—the Nimrod King of the Vampires, story in *Dracula Lives! #3*; the slim thread of Lord Turac's daughter (which figured in a story in *Giant-Size Dracula #3*)—became an obsession to me at that time, trying to touch on connections in the art that might not have existed in Steve's script (as with Turac's daughter; she is not mentioned, but I drew her into the appropriate panel to make the link with the earlier-told tale). I saturated myself with any and all of the Marvel Dracula comics and anything else that seemed pertinent. I went quite overboard, but it was great fun, and it made me feel confident about my work on the story. That it would adequately address and embellish the continuity of Marvel's firmly established Dracula characterisation became an honest-to-God *obsession.*

Upon being notified that John and I would be the next 'permanent' art team on the book after amigo Tom Yeates' departure, I immediately began to work up what was to become my obsession with the Swamp Thing. I tracked down all the past issues of his book, and any titles he had previously appeared in. I studied what had gone before carefully, reading and rereading until I felt I understood the character's past and, more importantly, his possible futures; I would, after all, have an active hand in that now.

I also researched the environment in which he lived and the many similar characters, Man-Thing, The Heap, noting their similarities, their differences, the core they shared. This will all be the subject of my next column, the first installment of my own personal *Swamp Thing Papers.* If you are already familiar with the book, I hope the future chapters of this column may add to your pleasure; if you don't know or care about the current *Swamp Thing* title, I hope that I might be able to interest you enough to pick up a copy and check it out for yourself. In any case the main purpose of this column will be to give you a taste of THE ARTISTIC LIFE—to show both how a working comic book artist approaches his work and fulfills it.

If nothing else, perhaps I can amuse you, eh?

Until next issue, happy trails....

Stephen R. Bissette
February 1984

Unplublished cover pencils by Bissette for Saga Of The Swamp Thing *#26*

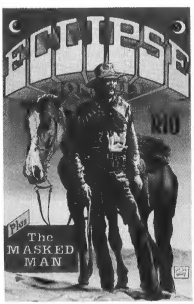
Publishers Picks

Two books debuted this month with interesting ideas and excellent execution. One is by Eclipse and the other DC. **Aztec Ace** offers one of the most creative twists on the idea of time travel that I have ever seen in print and suggests one hell of a lot of entertaining surprises in store for future issues. Doug Moench, not exactly a newcomer himself but not yet one of the grand old prose (although some of his best work is on Sherlock Holmes and Doc Savage, two of the oldest), and Mike Hernandez are responsible for this book. Other than a vague hint of Andre Norton and her Space Sioux nothing else has quite had the feel of this book. Do read it through at one sitting without interruption or you will be quite lost though.

The other, the one from DC, is by what is rapidly becoming their best writing team, Mitch Cohn and Dan Mishkin. The same team previously brought us the excellent Amethyst and now produces **Blue Devil,** quite a twist on the normal superhero motifs. The art is by Paris Cullins.

Two books have undergone revivals that take them from the bottom of the heap and firmly in everyone's ho-hum pile to the very pinnacle of today's treadmill productions. **Swamp Thing** has not changed art teams but you would certainly think that it did. Alan Moore, the latest import from the mother country to our poor colonies (just his stories, he still resides in Merry Olde England) has really inspired the penciller, Steve Bissette, and the inker, John Totleben. And it is easy to see why. Do take a look, what.

Spider-Man is also completely changed. And not just the costume, although the silly noises about that have drowned out the more important differences. Tom DeFalco has taken the writing helm of that book while Al Milgrom has begun to write the companion title, Peter Parker. Milgrom is obviously under the influence of his former editor. The character has breathed anew and is fresher and more interesting than at any time since the



creation of the book. Storylines are captivating and not dragged out; personal problems are once again running amuck; new powers and abilities are once again explored although this time instilled by the new costume. Take a look. You haven't seen the book look this good in quite some time.

Two reprints probably stand at the forefront of the offerings. **Fantastic Four Special Edition** and **New Gods** represent Jack Kirby's best work from two of his best periods (compared to Kirby most artists have a short lucky streak, even those that produce superb work for a decade or two—Kirby's first hot streak was way back at the beginning of modern comics in the late '30s and early '40s!). The first reprints the first annual of the premier team he created along with a writer named Lee, while the second represents the renaissance his work undertook when he first made his exodus to DC. The second promises new stories from Kirby along with a graphic novel. It is unfortunate that Kirby will probably be shown up by the creator of the series, himself. (By the way, DC has now made it official that the stories of the New Gods after Kirby left never took place. Did anyone need to be told this?)

DNAgents #9 is one of the best books ever and it promises very nice things for the upcoming Crossfire series. Dan Spiegle, the artist on the book lends real life to the story offered by Mark Evanier. DC made a bad mistake losing this team when they demoted the Blackhawk book. DC's loss is Eclipse's gain.

Also from Eclipse is the best western in comics. Doug Wildey is one of the top talents in the animation field. On the comic story featuring RIO in Eclipse Monthly he shows why. He also shows that comic books can be much more than they normally are.

Last for this month, although by no means least as the cliche goes, is Steve Ditko on **The Fly.** The character is uninspired and the company normally rather boring but this one is different. Ditko tells a story and draws the pictures as only he can. And they work very well together, they flow. Even more fun is the liberal dosage of Ayn Randian philosophy offered in the book. You just don't get that anywhere else in the field. Sadly, Ditko is probably the only libertarian or propetarian or objectivist or whatever in funnie books.

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★ **Consumer Guide** announces all of the upcoming releases due to be shipped from the various comic book publishers and offers a way to obtain the hard-to-find direct only books without ever leaving the comfort of your living room.

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